

Mawande Ka Zenzile

**Decolonising Visualities: changing cultural paradigms and
freeing ourselves from Western-centric epistemes.**

2017

**Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of MAFA in Art History at the University of Cape
Town**

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Dedication

I dedicate this project to my brother Raymond Zenzile, whose sudden death occurred the night before my exhibition opening, in 2015. I was made aware of his passing while I was busy finishing my exhibition installation and his passing I will always remember in my future exhibitions. Wawudla ngokutsho, uthi "sukugxama". Whatever you meant by that, but I think I can recognize the meaning of that word in my present life and art. Enkosi, ulale ngoxolo Mdlomo, Sophitsho, Zondwa zintshaba zingazumenza nto!

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Decolonising Visualities: Changing cultural paradigms, freeing ourselves from Western-centric epistemes

Mawande Ka Zenzile BA (FA)

Abstract

In this study, I hope to challenge the absolute belief in academia, which assumes that the perception of reality or visualities; in terms of culture, nature, truth and so on, by definition should be understood according to the Western philosophical character and genealogy as developed from a positivist paradigm. It seems to me, that the dominant methodological frameworks as I know them now, tacitly follow this scientific, quantitative, material, mechanical, positivist paradigm that draws from Western philosophical development and positions, pervasively held as the only basis for knowledge production. In turn, this philosophical position delegitimises any other epistemologies or methodological frameworks from elsewhere. In many cases, the methods of teaching and assessing subscribe, impose and perpetuate these same protocols as the only recognised epistemological and methodological approaches for critical inquiry inside tertiary educational institutions. By far, fine art as a discipline has inherited this epistemological position. To define this field in the context of decolonisation (meaning the undoing of colonisation), it requires us to look beyond disciplinary knowledge. This research is primarily an epistemological critique; and does not simply seek to “Africanise” the study of art, but to condemn the pervasive institutionalised cultural dominance. To frame my discourse, I have adopted an anti-colonial perspective, and a qualitative method to help define this phenomenon through a wide range of techniques. These include grounded theory; propositional logic; case study, narrative inquiry and auto-ethnography as possible tool for collecting, coding and analysing of data.

Keywords: decolonising, paradigm, philosophical position, development, African art, visualities, anti-colonialism, epistemology, methodology, cultural conditioning, self-determination

Introduction

The truth of the matter is that, after five centuries of “teaching” the world, the global North, seems to have lost the capacity to learn from the experiences of the world. In other words, it looks as if colonialism has disabled the global North from learning in noncolonial terms, that is, in terms that allow for the existence of histories other than the universal history of the West (Santos, 2014:19).

In this study, I argue that the worldview and the cultural modality that is underpinning and dominating our epistemological and methodological procedures and teaching across South African tertiary institutions perpetuates the goals of Westernised and capitalistic model of education. From where I stand, current tertiary education tacitly perpetuates an epistemology, which covertly maintains the universal standards of colonialism and capitalism, sustaining inequality, dependency, cultural hegemonies and erasure. This study aims to debunk Westernised knowledge systems, its mechanical beliefs and their institutionalised conditioning and epistemological dominance in current education.

Focussing on my experience of art education at the Michaelis School of Fine Art, University of Cape Town and the contemporary global art world within which I practice, I argue that it is not only a paradigm shift in the current pedagogical approaches that has become necessary but a nuanced understanding of what decolonization within the fine arts means. So, therefore, it is the understanding of this decolonization that could help us not only to shift away from western-centric belief systems but also to debunk their recurrent predominance. Therefore, decolonising visualities is a call for a paradigm shift and recognition of previously marginalised modalities in order to make subtle and covert forms of colonial influence perceptible, inside and outside of academia. And this requires a breakaway from the western-centric education model into an African model of education.

Currently, inside the academy, the educational model and philosophical worldview that dominates research traditions is an outgrowth of a Westernised, rational scientific, relativist, mathematical and empiricist research tradition that preserves scientific materialism and helps maintain colonial attitudes (superior vs. inferior episteme), which centres knowledge making on Western philosophical canon and genealogy. Moreover, this pedagogy produces specific disciplinary standards. These disciplinary standards are often coercive and covertly promote the model and logic of the Westernised research university setting as the only legitimate criteria of thought and perception (Santos, 2009; & Miller, 2015). This scientific mechanic belief system emerged in the 16th century in Europe, from the perception that Europeans have a superior view of the world and the “nature of being”. This belief gave justification to colonial conquest and organized religion to kill, plunder, erase, loot, convert; and destroy nature, and other world cultures.

For us “to understand the nature of European imperialism, we must understand the cultural conceptions that provide the ideological support for this kind of behaviour; the belief-system that makes it possible and that reinforces it” (Ani, 1994: 401). Up to this day this mechanical belief-system (and perhaps earlier European cultural doctrines) continues to reproduce itself and provide epistemic and ideological support that maintains itself inside the Westernised university. This belief-system is premised on the assumed relationship between “facts” and scientific knowledge, and this knowledge is in search of universal “truth”. This study seeks to discuss the impact that these ways of knowing have had on knowledge in the African context, specifically South African institutions of higher education.

Therefore, to understand how colonialism and capitalism are maintained in current art education and art practice, we need to understand this philosophical development; the underlying ideological premise of the discipline, and how they have developed, influenced and continue to maintain dogmatic disciplinary standards under the pretence of liberal education. Inside the academy, the rules of enquiry, “verification”, “confirmation”, and logic or the relation between “truth” and knowledge derives from European philosophical worldview of materialism. And the most influential schools of thought in recent times stem from this development. This development emerges mainly from the

dogmas of Positivism, German Idealism, and Logical Positivism. These epistemological developments characterises what I mean by Western-centric epistemes. To put things into context, by the word epistemology we mean the study of knowledge and how we know what to know and the “conceptions of what counts as legitimate knowledge and how you know what you claim to know” (Schon, 1995), is therefore crucial in my study on the production of knowledge in African arts.

This dissertation defines our current epistemological condition as tacit epistemology, which promotes cognitive and confirmation biases. The confirmation bias involves finding limited and limiting evidence to confirm our existing beliefs and to dismiss any evidence that contradicts our previously held views, about what shapes perception about art. This epistemology promotes an appeal to the authority of science. In contrary to prevailing beliefs, my point here is not to use scientific protocols to prove if my claims are truthful or not, but my point is to challenge the fundamental belief about research that scientism is the only tool that is available to understand and perceive or to be used to solve “human problems”.

The discipline of philosophy within the humanities in the 19th and 20th century has developed into two primary schools of thought that precedes from scientific doctrines and the worldview of the enlightenment philosophy, like those of René Descartes, Immanuel Kant, Thomas Hobbes, and Sir Frances Bacon. At the time, these developing traditions had one goal in common, which is that they wanted philosophy to be mundane, materialistic and impersonal. Such ideas could be traced from Cartesian dualism. In recent times these developing philosophic genealogies have advanced into Continental and Analytic philosophy, and out of these, later emerged the German Idealism, Logical Positivism, and later influenced the American Pragmatism, respectively. See (Russell, 1945; Ayer, 1936; & Comte 1854).

Yung-Kai Yang once noted that (2016:517):

The formation and development of organizations are not totally independent of outside influence; rather, they are shaped or constrained by various constituents

in the same organizational field because organizations need to behave in accordance with the institutional logics endorsed by the constituents in order to gain the legitimacy and resources necessary for their survival.

Western colonialism and imperialism were well-planned ways of centralising power, and its most compelling feature, beyond the gun and the exploitation of natural resources throughout the colonised worlds, was the colonisation of meaning. Marimba Ani articulates this as follows, that "the way the system of European control works is that we have to accept a concept of reality which makes them superior"... see Localmedianed (2011).

Here, I want to focus primarily on, what I would name, the hegemonies of perception or epistemic politics, concerning colonialism and Westernised education in Africa. Henceforth, we arrive at the following question that, "If the University of Cape Town is a university in Africa, why doesn't it reflect a more African image than what it currently represents"?

1. Historical background

It has been almost six decades since Kwame Nkrumah's Ghana was the first country to get its independence from its colonial empire, Britain. Technically speaking South Africa is the last on the list to gain its independence¹. While most African countries were reconstructing themselves after the independence era, South Africa was still under the Apartheid government.

From the Independence Era (1960s-1980s), throughout the African continent, there have been dissidents against this structure of dominance. Whether by using arm struggle, rioting, or protest, there has always been a resistance tradition against imperialism and colonialism, as such anti-colonization and decolonization grew out of this resistance tradition. Anti-colonial thought refers to "a complex discourse that highlights different ways that colonized people have countered their colonial experiences" (Dei; Kempf, 2006: 94). However, for the scope of this dissertation, my focus is my lived South African experience and other concise histories of other parts of sub-Saharan Africa.

¹ Although many would claim that South Africa received its independence earlier than most formerly colonised African states, that declaration only meant unify the Dutch and the British, it was never about giving back the land and control back to indigenous black Africans. As a result, sooner after, the apartheid laws began, up until 1994, at least the overtly social policies.

For historical assessment of colonial universities in Africa, Davidson Nicol's *Politics, Nationalism and Universities in Africa* (1963), gives a comprehensive, and the first-hand background on the establishment of Sub-Saharan Africa early colonial universities and shows that the majority of these still are structured according to the Western-centric model of education. Education, historical and current, is used to perpetuate cultural conditioning. Academics and academic institutions also play an influential role in the designing of policies and regulations, and this allows institutionalisation of their dominance on society as they did in the past.

2. Conceptual framework

First and foremost, in this study, my intellectual growth as a student and an art practitioner inform my theoretical framework. Secondly, to frame my conceptual framework and discourse, I draw from the past and current anti-colonial literature; pan-Africanist and afro-centric theories in order to convey 1) detachment arising from western pedagogic contexts in which scientific research dictates and alienates, and 2) and disenchantment as it pertains to the postcolonial condition (which I discuss in Chapter 1). I use this perspective beyond moralistic or pseudo-nationalist positions. And reflect on anti-colonial critical heritage beyond moralism or its conceptual postulations assimilated inside the Westernised university, i.e., thinking through these beyond the symptoms of Relativism and Postmodernism. These postulations, in my view, promote victimhood and meaningless pseudo-radicalism, which until this day inside the academy, especially in the Humanities, parades as subversion.

Below I name a few of these theories that have been very useful from the very beginning of this study, and here some are heavily referenced for thematic coding and as grounding theories for understanding colonialism, and the phenomena as discussed in this research. Moreover, these include Marimba Ani Yurugu (1994); Fanon (1967); Cheikh Anta Diop's *Civilisation* (1981), Santos's *Epistemologies of The South* (2014). This inquiry is grounded in these theories. These authors, at least for me, have

advanced decolonisation, and anti-colonial discourse and are debunking the pervasive Western-centric philosophic genealogies and their structure of the university, the Westernised university. To make decolonisation possible, we need unshakable strength, courage, and desire for self-determination, as we learn from these pan-Africanist, and decolonization authors. And this study does not intend to discuss this literature word-for-word or even analyse the “synthetic a priori knowledge” as we are expected to do by the epistemology of Positivism. Here I draw from these authors, antidotes to consciously, intentionally debunk, and problematise the quantitative logic, which is what is afforded by the qualitative approach. The Qualitative approach is an exploratory methodology that I have chosen to employ, as defined further below, in section 5.

Subsequently, finding primary textbooks, during this research, on the history of ideas and Western philosophy, and the concepts that underpin art philosophy has been an eye-opening experience. Exposure to the original text, which underpins the structure of Western knowledge (from the scientific revolution of the 15th century until the industrial period in the 18th century), including the history of Western education, gives one a broader perspective, which allows one to see beyond the limitations and illusions of disciplinary conditioning and its systems of knowledge.

The first knowledge or original texts are rarely taught (in some cases tacitly taught) inside the discipline of fine art. Primary knowledge or first-hand knowledge can be understood as original research, conducted or invented and authored by the researcher. This knowledge can be associated with the direct experience of the knower to what he or she knows, or to or from what is knowable; qualitatively, or quantitatively. This absence of first-hand knowledge makes it hard to recognise the limited application of knowledge about the study, in turn, limiting our perception of visualities. What do we mean by perception? Perception is that which help us understand reality, and this process of understanding depends on the information that we receive about the world. This process can be personal and impersonal.

In an outcome-based education system, perception is only limited, to an understanding that comes from a data bits of deductive information received. Generally, our understanding of discourse in art history, the art discourse, derives predominantly on secondary knowledge course readers (as these are commonly shared and peer-reviewed in study circles and tutorials) and this shapes this limited understanding. And this has systematised a monolithic and consistent way of knowing-how.

In this, I've discovered that secondary literature, which dominates the fine art discipline (possibly the rest of humanities episteme), promotes a linear and monolithic conscious. Our minds inside the discipline are shaped according to this deductive logic or knowing-how, as a way to reproduce thoughts about art that would perpetuate a monolithic fine art paradigm. Secondary knowledge can be understood as texts that have been written and influenced by ideas from original research done by another researcher — ideas presented in a secondary source mostly conducted as a response or a review of original research.

So, one's academic success or failure on assessment, peer-reviews or literature review are influenced by the shared beliefs and biases of this paradigm. For example, the literature review, as required in the quantitative technique enforces the empirical and deductive method, as essential methodological protocols. A literature review involves an examination or analysis of general theories as agreed (tacitly) inside the paradigm. Since literature reviews as framed according to "known facts" or objective knowledge, this makes the study results predictable, coercive and detached from lived social experience. Literature reviews reinforce the perpetual fruitless citation of the same "white male" writers to the demise of African and women writers and unpublished but equally intellectually credible indigenous thinkers operating outside higher education institutions. And furthermore, this method robs the student the urgency to think and the ability to trust their intuition and judgments.

Although as students, is often said that, we are allowed to look for independent sources or data, at the same time, the course materials prescribed, covertly coerces our understanding. This cohesion is the challenge of disciplinary knowledge, as I understand it now. The disciplinary pedagogy mostly endorses secondary knowledge and inference as fundamental ways of (re) producing knowledge and shared understanding. At its best, the scientific epistemology is useful for spreading rumours, and promoting and institutionalising a culture of gossiping. In turn, creating gossipers, who are out of touch with reality.

Our minds are enchanted continuously with solving abstract concepts, tentatively turning researchers and future scholars into gullible members of society, instead of creating independent critical thinkers. This form of scientific and social conditioning advanced, human behaviorism, and moral philosophy toward the 21st century. Instead of looking for solutions to our problems, this epistemology set us up or enchant us with a detached, conceptual and abstracted view of the world. In this way of thinking, the scholar is expected to “unpack” what is already “true” in the premise of the (mostly abstract and conceptual) problem. Such beliefs have developed from Positivism philosophy of Auguste Comte, John Locke’s idea of “blank slate”, which I allude to in the chapters below.

I have also realised that this system of learning is a downgraded version of a medieval education system, provided to the elite groups in the Western world — known as the classical liberal arts education or the trivium as understood throughout the ancient Greek. Trivium consisted of grammar, logic, and rhetoric. Grammar meant to teach one how to write and read eloquently, and to understand the language deeper. Logic showed the ability to reason (deductively and inductively) and guided the rules and styles of reasoning. While rhetoric teaches one to be confident and articulate in public speaking and helps one communicate clearly in the art of persuasion, yet not necessarily concerned

with moralism and "vocationalism" unlike the goals of capitalist industrialist education in recent years.

3. Statement of the problem

The commercialised, globalised, universalised, industrialised, liberal education we receive currently, does not teach the masses, “the people” how to survive, strive (to succeed) and participate in the current global market. On the other hand, its curricular denies, discriminate, and alienate local and indigenous epistemologies. Taking away the power to name, create, and the self-determination of Africans. Hence, I derived at the call to decolonise education.

To do this decolonisation, we need an educational model, which will uplift and empower. We need to create a society of producers, inventors, investors, and creative thinkers, not just labourers. Not only to serve the desires of industrial capitalism but also to improve, remodel sustainable ecosystems that will fulfill needs and wants of indigenous society. And rebuild a system that won't merely make Africans consumers or labourers for monopoly capitalistic systems, especially those continue since Apartheid.

Crucially, we must remember that colonialism and Apartheid robbed Africans their sense of “beingness” and imposed its economic, social, and spiritual systems that are still to remain alienating and elusive to Africans. For example, (South) Africans participate in an economic system they don't understand, that is to say, that financial knowledge remains illicit and elitist. And this, as a result, contributes to classism of economic empowered elite class, amongst a disillusioned and financially illiterates of middle and lower class societies.

Financial literacy is a very tabooed, tacit and secret topic in our society, and this will not change until we change our preconceived attitudes towards the relationship between finance and wellbeing, in a predominantly capitalist economic society.

Africans always had ways of sustaining themselves, including documenting their history, culture, and knowledge before the Europeans influenced Africans with their Christian missionary education and deemed their episteme as superstitious and antiquated. This colonial act has resulted in Africans being cut off from their indigenous ways. And as a result, the dominant African society we're conditioned to undermine our modalities and follow the Western directions. For Africans colonisation, means the destruction of the land, culture, knowledge, the death of her dignity and loss of the soul. Which is why we need we decolonisation, to remediate the past and envision, and create a better future for Africans and the world.

Cheikh Anta Diop's work and the work of many other Africans have denounced the views that "Africa had no history". Walter Rodney talk about the carefully planned plot in which, "Europe underdeveloped Africa" (1972), through foreign policies, and Europe had since determined the neo-colonialism, Africa's future, and this is still relevant until this day. Even today, no better discourse is worth considering. As we all should know that it is common knowledge that Africa as a continent is rich with mineral wealth beyond any other continent on earth, but its people remain the poorest nations in the world. And it is still Europe and the West who continue benefiting from the wealth of Africa.

Also, these texts disprove the myth that African societies were uncivilized until the Europeans first arrived in Africa. Most importantly, African scholars have left documents proving the African contribution to world knowledge; including philosophy, mathematics, music, art, physical and natural sciences amongst many, a fact which rebukes the Occidental myth of the "uncivilized" and "barbaric" African. It is in the same light that we must rethink how African art represented in the West, that is to

say, negative imagination about African culture and visualities in the West persist until this day. Hence, we must decolonise visualities and begin with art education and its discourse.

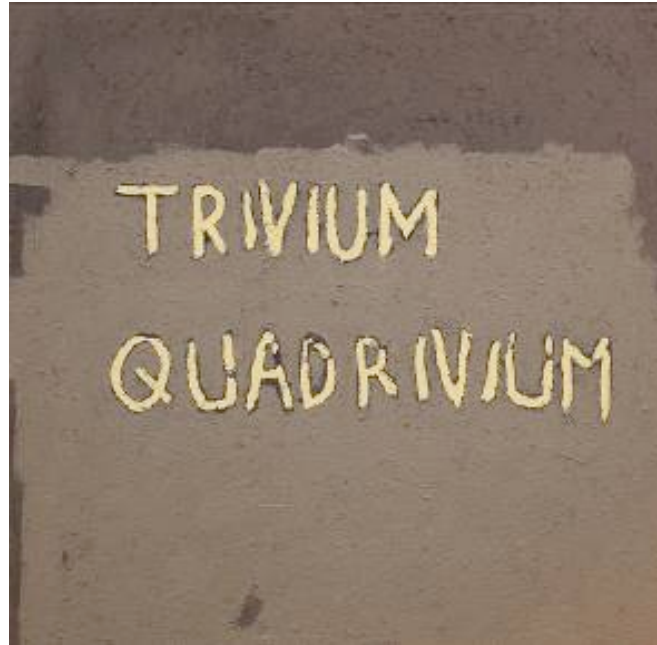


Figure 1 – Mawande Ka Zenzile, “The Alchemist” 2017, cow dung and oil paint on canvas. © Mawande Ka Zenzile. Courtesy of private collection

Books such as *Civilisation or Barbarism* (1981), and *Towards the African Renaissance* (1996), I believe are vitally important for understanding the historical and epistemic erasure of Africa, and its contribution and influences to global knowledge. Diop’s *Civilization or Barbarism* and *African Renaissance* are both pioneering works, concerning promoting African history and expertise and stressing Black Africa’s contribution to the development of world cultures, science, philosophy, linguistics, art, music, and other disciplines, omitted by the positivist paradigms inside colonial Westernised universities.

Diop reminds me of S. E. K Mqhayi, who critiqued Western imperialism and colonialism, while at Lovedale, a missionary college founded in 1824. Mqhayi was amongst many other amaXhosa literati who navigated the Christian faith and Xhosa ancestry and knowledge. Mqhayi documented and

promoted the history, philosophy, and culture of AmaXhosa while he was under pressure to convert to Christianity and censorship of Lovedale missionary.

I single out Diop just because his influence was felt across the seas by many people of African descent, amongst those who began movements such as Pan-Africanism and Afrocentric, both on the continent and the African diaspora. People like John Hendrik Clarke, Molefe K Asante, Marimba Ani, Amos N. Wilson and other brave, militant African scholars, spoke very highly of Diop. This thesis is, in part an expression of appreciation to Diop and many other Pan-Africans, Afrocanising movements and the role they played in bringing African knowledge to the forefront. Diop is amongst the leading scholars that reclaimed archaeological heritage and interpretation of ancient Egypt's highly sophisticated ancient culture ruins. During his time, Diop debunked the study of Egyptian artifacts and writings, from the previous analyses by Europeans. In the course of political turmoil in his country of birth, Senegal, he was amongst those who were banned by Léopold Senghor's government.

Throughout history, the European civilisation has located itself at the centre of human history and origins. Unlike any other hegemonic systems of dominion, Western methods of power, argues Marimba Ani in a television interview about her book "Yurugu", with Listervelt Middleton, Ani explains that "the nature of the European Asili was to seek power"... she continues to say that, "Europeans has been most successful at archiving world domination because everything within the culture supports the quest for domination... Including their philosophical concepts, their concept of "truth", the academia" and so and so on. This perceptual and conceptual dominion is still pervasive until this day, especially inside the westernised African university. See Localmcmmedianed, (2011).

This study is the result of eight years of observing the teaching, frameworks and assessment methods at the Michaelis School of Fine Art, at the University of Cape Town, as well as my lived experience

as a practicing artist. Throughout the time I have spent at UCT, I have experienced the art curricula as culturally biased, alienating, Western-centric, and dogmatic.

Throughout my years of study, most reading materials have been biased towards “non-Western” views; this is evident in the canonical literature, advocated in this discipline. The course content of reading materials is predominantly Western-centric; the general theory and underpinning text promote this worldview. Fine Art discipline, just like most disciplines in the institutions of higher learning, imposes a hegemonic system of thought. According to Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999: 68):

The colonizing of the other through discipline has some different meanings. In terms of the way knowledge was used to discipline the colonized it worked in a variety of ways. The most visible forms of discipline were through exclusion, marginalization, and denial of Indigenous means of knowing were excluded and marginalized.

At Michaelis School of Fine Art, they only introduced African, postcolonial and subaltern literature in the later stages of the undergraduate degree programme. Of course, this is after being bombarded with modernism and postmodernism theories in the course content as an introduction to the discipline. For several seminars and possibly the rest of the undergraduate years, it meant that we would be taught and enchanted to a Western-centric criterion. One’s perception of art, creativity or visual expression is dominated by definition from Western philosophical canon. Art curricular, depending on the intention, play a role in maintaining and enforcing specific aesthetical values, frameworks, cultural values, and discourses, which predominately located in the West.

Thus, this form of epistemic bias hinders any possibility for an alternative understanding of Fine Art. Another problem is that the methodological approach mostly used at undergraduate and graduate level left unexplained, and yet at the same time, it is applied as a set of rules. And this is inherent in the epistemic hegemony of Positivism, which I discuss in this dissertation.

The department procedures are biased and technically designed, covertly, to hinder any theoretical attempts at producing alternative knowledge. This biased epistemology often forces one to assimilate the worldview of the colonisers. It is essential also to note that colonialism has also “disabled the west from learning from other experiences of the world” and its philosophic tradition has reached a deadlock and this may be the reason why “the global North seems to have little to teach the world” (Santos, 2014:19).

It is only during my postgraduate study, where I realised that my four-year degree does not teach one how to theorise properly. I have only recognized during the graduate stage that in research or the general practice, there are research instruments called methodologies, which were necessary for theory and research. The discipline of Fine Art, at the University of Cape Town, is a testimony to this learned ignorance and my journey to debunk and decolonise fine art began by choosing an alternative methodology.

4. Research methodology approach

The methodology is that which guides the researcher in determining what questions are worth investigation, which proper tools, frameworks and “a philosophical stance of a worldview that underlies and informs a style of research” (Sapsford, 2006:175). Research methodologies have an epistemic impact and place preconception notion and previously held beliefs above the research findings. They impose a certain kind of positionality.

So, after I realised that it would not be possible within the given approach (quantitative) to even begin this process (decolonising), that is when I looked for alternative ways that could allow me to express my thoughts on the relationship between art, art education and the perception of reality and visualities.

I realised that methodological and epistemological systems could serve as an instrument of power and coercion, and this has motivated my research approach and framework.

After an extended period of contending for alternative ways to attend to this study, I realised that the qualitative methodology approach seemed more suitable for decolonisation since it allowed me to draw from a broad range of data collection, coding and investigation to support my argument. This methodology does not rely upon deduction or syllogism; it is an exploratory method, which means that qualitative research “can give voice to underrepresented groups” (Creswell, 2012:131).

We need to try and think about what we mean when we say “reality” or when we say “truth”, or “humanity” in African terms, provided that we use African epistemes and modalities to think through these concepts. So, hence, I have adopted a qualitative, anti-colonial approach as a methodology and conceptual framework. This whole dissertation follows a qualitative research approach, as a move away from the usual quantitative methodological approach (a positivist, pragmatist and deductive system of inquiry), which was and still is compulsory at the Michaelis School of Fine Art at the undergraduate level up to graduate degree.

A qualitative approach is a variety of methods for conducting research. It involves induction, coding, grounded theory, narrative and auto-ethnographic procedures for creating, collecting data, and the creation of new knowledge from multiple ways. Inductive reasoning is a process of reaching a conclusion based on a pattern (the outcome is probable), but without limiting data collection on the empirical method. The qualitative approach is an open-ended epistemology. Therefore, the nature of this writing had been unpredictable and unfolded.

Also, here, I use a wide range of methods, and these include grounded theory; propositional logic; case study, narrative inquiry, and auto-ethnography as a possible tool for collecting, coding and analysing of data. To investigate, observe, recognise, and decode patterns of knowledge on my study,

and to possibly draw my conclusion. Also, I have conducted interviews for more data where necessary, and these interviews have been open-ended and have had variable questions and outcomes.

This qualitative approach allowed me to begin the inquiry with a subjective proposition or a set of questions or issues and work my way towards the development of a theory. This approach is what is meant by the “bottom-up” approach. In contrast, the quantitative approach is grounded on the deduction procedure, and it depends heavily on objective knowledge. It uses pre-existing data/secondary data to inform the research question. The deduction is a process of reaching a conclusion that relies on known facts and objective knowledge, and the outcome is inevitable. An inference argument constitutes syllogisms a logical structure that leads to an end following a set of premises and this is a scientific and mathematical scheme of reasoning as developed by Logical Positivism itself developed, from the deductive logic of Aristotle. This procedure means that if even if the premises or conclusion are false if the sentences follow the right logical order, the answer deemed as “sound”.

This dissertation intends to denounce deduction for its predictability and the way it is systematically used to erase other worldviews and perpetuate its Western dominance of knowledge and perception. This structure of reasoning could not be used for this study because it limits and makes the research findings predictable.

EXAMPLE OF SYLLOGISM

MAJOR PREMISE: *All men are trash*

MINOR PREMISE: *John is a man*

CONCLUSION *John is trash*

Figure 2 – A diagram that shows an example of deductive reasoning/syllogism. Source: Developed by author, graphic design by Zona Magadla. © Mawande Ka Zenzile

It is not helpful to use the quantitative approach on an exploratory and unpredictable topic such as decolonisation. Even though I discovered that qualitative approach is made to seem like it is not a legitimate methodology for academic research inquiry in the department of fine art at UCT, it has become necessary for the paradigmatic shift that my study necessitates. Also, there is nothing wrong with using the quantitative method in general, but it depends on the kind of research question the scholar is undertaking. It becomes problematic if imposed as the only tool to create and legitimise knowledge, given its rigid structure. This method might as well be suitable for rocket science, chemistry, mathematics, and economics as they are taught and practiced. But I can confidently argue that fine art does not go beyond quantifying, multiplying or subtraction.

The quantitative methodology fundamentally omits other data, while privileging others, and this creates the cognitive bias this study critiques. By drawing from my autobiography as an artist and my

eight years of studying art at the University of Cape Town, this research approach allows me to critique the pervasive power relations in the creation of knowledge.

5. Theoretical data, collecting, and coding

As I have mentioned above, I have employed a method of grounded theory and have cited my primary and secondary theoretical data. In my essay structure or style of writing, I have also intentionally used sentential or propositional logic or sound bites from bits of information that relate to my topic.

Propositional logic refers to true or false sentences. It does not go into individual sentences to analyse or discuss their meanings.

Furthermore, I have also used the inductive approach to generate and interpret my findings, although they are not quantifiable or measurable. I have also perused course readers from 2009 to 2016 and analysed assessment types, such as essay and tests questions from the fine art department's syllabus.

Therefore, I have chosen an interdisciplinary methodological approach in the study of new knowledge as a solution for debunking traditional research models. One should note that the process of decolonisation is not static. We should not be limited to objective truth and historical revision alone to understand ideas and inferences about our world. Decolonisation and anti-colonisation as a conceptual framework should derive from the clashes of the colonial past and the present experience of the colonised, and the confrontations with colonial reminiscences. This decolonisation is meant to defer according to context, background, space, and time. This decolonisation is not essentialist, but it is contextual and local. Hence, decolonisation is against any universalising theories, but at the same time not claiming that there is no generality in the real world, for example, the air we're breathing or the salty water that surrounds all of our societies, or the fundamental human conditions such as our emotions, aspirations, mortality or sometimes our desire for immortality and so on. It is an on-going

opposition between the former coloniser and the former colonised, and the contestation for power and legitimacy.

6. Aims of the study

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- To decentralise the notion that Western knowledge is all-encompassing.
- To address the systematic exclusion of indigenous knowledge and its nuances within the discipline of Fine Art.
- To address the historical gaps in the institutional representation of art from Africa, in spaces such as museums, galleries, art museums, whose fundamental worldview founded on mechanical, positivist, materialist beliefs.
- To engage with the pervasive and nuanced nature of Western-centric episteme in promoting superstitious materialism as the only legitimate criterion of knowledge inside and outside the academy.
- To look beyond disciplinary knowledge, curricular, or syllabus as a way to escape the academic paradigm and its dogmatic matrix of thought.
- To begin an epistemological critique beyond the Westernised research tradition, that is to say, to think about our problems beyond ideas of Positivism, or Continental or Analytical traditions. And this breakaway for me necessitates a real "decolonising of the mind", beyond linguistic, moralistic postulations.
- To explore the limitations and nuances of anticolonial theory as a framework to think through.

Chapter 1: Disenchantment and detachment

The institution of art is not only “institutionalized” in organizations like museums and objectified in art objects. It is also internalized, embodied, and performed by people. It is internalized in the competencies, conceptual models and modes of perception that allow us to produce, write about and understand art, or simply to recognize art as art, whether as artists, critics, curators, art historians, dealers, collectors, museum visitors. (Wilson, 2008: 67-68)

When I entered academia, I felt a sense of alienation due to the course content that ignored and disregarded my heritage and modality. There was insufficient material in our course readings and lectures for me to learn about my culture, which supported my South African experience (as I experienced it while growing up). The course content at Michaelis was selectively designed and communicated, only to espouse the European philosophical ideas and culture. There was no provision or earnest attention paid to indigenous history and knowledge in both my lectures and tutorials. This is when I've realised that the problem lies most with our curricular, is the enchantment with Western authors and abstract concepts, and this has institutionalised a homogenised way of perceiving art.

Our perception of reality is beyond what Western science and philosophy could offer. Therefore, decolonisation requires the aptitude to unlearn, recognise, and debunk Western-centric epistemes. Furthermore, we need to be disenchanted with Western-centric literature and methodologies. For us to free ourselves from Western-centric thought, it is essential that we begin our critique of the analytic tools that began with the construction of disciplines. Hence, academia is most useful in maintaining scientific reasoning and its dominance over local and indigenous epistemes (Higgins, 2013 and 2014).

1. Positioning myself

I was born in Lady Frere, in the Eastern Cape, where I spent most of my childhood, and I later moved to Cape Town. The experience alone of growing up in the countryside has had an enormous impact on me; it has exposed me modalities and epistemologies of my people, AmaXhosa²This worldview; its cultural ethos, spirituality, and knowledge systems have influenced how I make sense of my surroundings. Here is where I begin to define myself as Africa.

Before I could describe myself as a regional African, I am umXhosa. This is my way to avoid claiming to present or misrepresent the entire continent or concept of sub-Saharan Africa.

I grew up playing and making ceramic cattle from mud that we found in earth fissure, surrounding my village. These events were my earliest training in art making. My artistic journey began here. By the time I moved from Eastern Cape to Cape Town, I have already had training. When I got to Cape Town, I attended art classes, as an extra-mural activity at the South African College School (SACS) in Newlands, Cape Town. Since my primary school, Hlengisa Primary, a public school from Nyanga East, did not offer art training. Although my early art education focused on variant techniques of art making, there was never a period where I felt art as ideologically cohesive. The coercion happened later on in my life when I was practicing as an artist and fine art student at tertiary.

My first formal art teacher was Mrs. Sue Devine, an art teacher from SACS, who exposed me to various art mediums. These included oil painting, acrylic painting, charcoal, collage, and many more. After school, there used to be a bus from SACS that comes to my school in Nyanga East to put us up

². IsiXhosa is a language commonly spoken in the southern regions of South Africa. Throughout this essay I will refrain from using the anglicized version of the name Xhosa, I will continue using the latter with its prefix so that I do not lose the nuanced, complex and rich meaning of the word. The word *Xhosa*, which is the Anglicized version misrepresents the variable uses of the word (AmaXhosa, IsiXhosa, UbuXhosa, UmXhosa).

and drop us at SACS. After completing primary school, I went to the Frank Joubert Art and Design Centre, which is currently known as the Peter Clarke Art Centre, named after the renowned artist who was one of my mentors, Peter E. Clarke. At Frank Joubert, I was introduced to art history and then majored in painting and drawing classes. Mrs. Jill Joubert, who gave a very balanced account of the art of Africa and Europe, taught Art history. The Frank Joubert Art and Design Centre allowed me to position myself in the understanding of cultural knowledge. Mrs. Joubert did not show one account above the other. Her teachings leaned more towards African records than those of Europe.

In painting, Mrs. Liesl Hartman taught me, and I was one of the best students in her class. She used to push very hard for us to complete her assignments, but she was very open to my interpretations and techniques. Towards the end of this research, I went back to the art centre to visit her, and during our conversation, Liesl reminded me that my research question and interest still reflects how she knows me. She was referring to how she has known me in general, but also a project I did for my final year at the art centre, which was an illustrated book on "myths and legends" of AmaXhosa.

I remember my first day of her classes when she asked everybody to introduce themselves and their religion. I was the only one in the class who gave an obscure or strange answer for their religion. From my understanding, isiXhosa is both religion and philosophy, unlike other culture, where there is a division of theology, philosophy, and spirituality. Other pupils were surprised by my response when I said that my religion was "isiXhosa". A person that was sitting next to me on that day whispered "Christian". Of course, the person might have been said this in good faith, assuming that I misheard the question since I was still learning English, hence helping me? Or perhaps, this person never came to think of isiXhosa as a religion?

Nonetheless, This is a small example of how subtle and pervasive Western culture and religion is normalised here in South Africa. Everyone else inside that classroom perceived only Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Judaism, as true religions, yet Mrs. Joubert welcomed my answer.

In Mrs. Joubert art history, we learned about the history of the Kingdom of Mapungubwe and other African civilisations, which were central and appealed to our understanding of art. This Art History stressed the importance of these civilizations. We studied about earliest realistic human forms or figuration depicted in sculpture from Benin, Nigeria, including some "rock" paintings of hunting and human inhabitants found in caves of Southern Africa, that dates back centuries. And these, one can argue, do challenge the notions that painting or realistic depiction of subject matter in art only came from Europe. It was only at the tertiary level that I experienced a significant breakaway from these histories of Africa. To decolonise visualities, we need to denounce the widespread influence on European conceptual models and modes of perception. And this is what this chapter suggests by "disenchantment", - a break away from the systematic ways of assimilation into western ways of producing knowledge, institutionalised in the conceptual models and modes of perception of the academy.



Figure 3 - Ife/Yoruba Bronze Head. Un-dated. Image sourced from pinterest.com.



Figure 4 - Oba commemorative head, date 16th Century, Brass, 23.5 x 21.9 x 22.9 cm. Image sourced from Metropolitan Museum of Art (www.metmuseum.org)

Since I have recognised that the art curricula at the Michaelis School of Fine Art, University of Cape Town, where I studied my undergraduate and postgraduate, predominantly promoted Western art canon and philosophy as the basis for perceiving art, this stems from a covert influence of positivism, and historicism frameworks.

The concept of "detachment" in this chapter explores how this Westernised pedagogy, universalise dislocated, disconnecting and alienated epistemology, erasing a cultural memory and everyday experiences of indigenous people. This is the main reason I felt compelled, in this study, to look for methodologies and conceptual framework beyond disciplinary knowledge. In light of this, I conceptualised my research through a consideration of disenchantment and decolonisation.

For some time, I have also been battling with these representational and perceptual issues in my art practice. My gallery, Stevenson, often puts me in contact with local and international art historians, curators, and art lovers alike, and most often in my art career I negotiate the misleading ways in which my work is framed.

Since I consciously, draw from my heritage, I encounter a lot of misreading of my works. I think the misreading comes with deep-rooted stereotypes and misconceptions of what I represent as an African artist, in the eyes of others. These misconceptions claim that the Western descriptions are universal, and therefore, must fit all.

As we say in isiXhosa "*amehlo akaphakelani*". This idiom means that people do not necessarily perceive things the same way, or it may also be understood as the saying in English, "let's agree to

disagree". For example, if a dispute arises, someone will say this suggests that both parties understand a phenomenon from a different point of view and both parties convinced that they are telling a "subjective truth" from their different point of view. Since not all understanding of art could be limited to the study of Western art history, my work evokes these politics, which I conceptualise as "hegemonies of perception".

Often, most of my installation works draw from my heritage and material culture, as it can be seen below in figure 9 and 10. Figure 9, shows *igoqo* from my hometown, in Lady Frere, which is an example of an original construction as presented in figure 10. According to amaXhosa customs, Igoqo symbolises and is a space of gathering for women or matriarchy. It has been customary that women of the community rally around *igoqo*, to attend to during social, customary and cultural occasions. No men are allowed to intervene in this space. It's the ideal "safe space" for women!

Depending on the skills of the person packing the wood, the pile of a skilled wood picker (umcholi wenkuku) as visually pleasing or beautiful. There are people from many villages that are known to be good at packing and balancing the pile. Primarily, the woodpile is collected for making fire. Also, it has cultural significance as material culture and symbolises strength and resilience. Igoqo is viewed and appreciated as an aesthetic form. *Igoqo*, though not necessarily used for direction like a "cairn", it has similar cultural meanings as the cairns from other culture around the world.

Igoqo also symbolises unity and strength, as understood in this tradition. Igoqo, in my work, is a letter to my mom to show appreciation for holding firm after our father passed away.

I come from a society (especially in the Eastern Cape) where matriarchal and patriarchal traditions co-exist and are complementary, rather than conflicting with one another. Unlike, the dualistic social

structure of the Western world, this relationship is the complex social structure I grew up seeing. *Abafazi egoqweni amadoda ebuhlanti!* [An expression that means the rightful place of women (abafazi) is next to *igoqo*, and that of men is the kraal]. And this was not intended to discriminate. Traditionally, women and men work together and towards progress or execution of tasks, ceremonies, and events of such, in the community.



Figure 5 – Mawande Ka Zenzile, "Ikati ilel' eziko", 2013, Igoqo (sticks, stone), found family portrait (reproduced, enlarged and framed)

"Ikati lilel' eziko" is a work I showed in my 4th-year exhibition in 2013, at the Michaelis School of Fine Art, UCT. I still remember keeping the wood in my studio almost the entire year, in 2013, in preparation for installing. The image on the background is the last photograph that we have of our father (in the picture is my mother Nolulamile Zenzile, my brother Thanduxolo Zenzile, and my late father, Vokwana Zenzile).

It is also *ubuhlanti* for men, which functions almost similarly to *igoqo*, but for men's chores. This relationship means that this group share duty amongst each other, there is no imposed hierarchy, unlike in Western societies. One might argue that emaXhoseni; men became the so-called "head of the

house", through the encounter with Christianity and western ways. In my work, I celebrate this heritage, but most importantly, for me, these influences guide me in my art practice to disrupt the hegemonies of perception.



Figure 6 - Image of Igoqo in Esingeni, Mbinzana District, Lady Frere. © Maweande Ka Zenzile

2. Positioning this study

During this study, I have had to function in a world that has continuously told me that to intellectualise; I must do so in a particular language, in particular spaces, and through specific behaviours. It is the world that has also consistently reminded me that as a scholar, my race influences how I am (mis)understood in that intellectual world. So, the very notion of detachment connotes the predicament of current scholarship in the African context, in that it involves the violent exclusion or being "cut-off" from broader intellectual conversations and yet being at the same time enchanted with the rational thinkers, and however being compelled to be disenchanted.



Figure 7 - Mawande Ka Zenzile, “Ingqami (The end of an ideology)”, 2015

There is a pervasive belief in the minds of many who are in Western universities that Africans do not have a written philosophical tradition. There is the perception that the university is not an African idea, even though one of the earliest universities in the world, the University of al-Qarawiyyin, founded in 859 AD, in the city of Fez, Morocco, is located in North Africa. In the past, for four years, the University has been undergoing restoration.

Inside a Westernised University such as the University of Cape Town, the literary tradition from Africa, by African authors is often overlooked and omitted, and these works of literature document an intellectual heritage of pre-colonial and colonial Africa from an Africa perspective. Often when we want to use this literary legacy, we are told that they are not "academically recognised," and we are

discouraged from using these as central theories to understand our experiences, as the methodology dictates.

In 2016, I attended a course at the Centre for African Studies, called "Problematising the Study of Africa: Interrogating the Disciplines", I participated in this lecture, as recommended to me, by my previous supervisor and other people in my department. Although I was not officially registered in that course, since I had left the study group at Michaelis, I thought the African Studies would offer something better. Also, I found the title of the course attractive, since I was looking for an alternative study group, different literature, and approaches from disciplinary knowledge. I thought this course would offer me some clues. However, I realised right in that first lecture, that the literary scholarship that underpinned Fine Art, was also central or served as a foundation for the epistemology of this course ("Problematising the Study of Africa").

The course convener opened up a discussion on what counts as legitimate academic knowledge. However, everything became clear to me, when I later realised the course itself implemented implicit theoretical biases as implemented in the Fine Art discipline. Notably, the pervasive enchantment with Postmodernism or Relativism epistemology remained central to this course.

For example, this course drew heavily from the text of Michel Foucault, the Foucauldian notion of "knowledge and power". This "study of Africa" was based on Foucault's conceptualism primarily. This, for me, was a "red flag". I must say that this frustrated me, and then I left the course. Ever since my undergraduate, these theories have alienated me from my heritage. Here it was evident to me, what was taking place was a battle, a battle for epistemic legitimacy.

In South Africa, there are many historical accounts, documented and possibly undocumented clashes between colonial invaders (British or Dutch) against indigenous people. This moment of my study, I felt like I was in the Battle of Isandlwana, a mental struggle, rather than a physical one. The Battle of Isandlwana happened in 1879, when AmaZulu army defeated the British army, on the hill of Isandlwana, in KwaZulu Natal.

Here I refer to these to show that in the struggle against colonialism, the indigenous people did not lose all the battles, even though they were fighting with an enemy with more powerful guns than them. In the visual interpretation of this event below, the work of Namibian (South African) artist, John Muafangejo, there is the allegory of this historical struggle composed from the negative-positive technique in linocut, a method the artist learned from missionary school. The "Battle of Rorke's Drift" is amongst the earliest epistemic and territorial encounters between the invaders and indigenous Africans, in the history of South Africa. In recent times, this clashing is not between armed soldiers on the battlefield of Isandlwana, but the battlefield is the institutions of high learning nation-wide. The struggle is against the continuing colonialism and imperialism.



Figure 8 - John Muafangejo, “Battle of Rorke’s Drift” 1961, Linocut © Campbell Smith Collection. Image sourced from Revisions.co.za

In the past two years, tertiary institutions across South Africa experienced intense protests, and there were shutdowns by students, workers and some academics that were and remain fed-up by pervasive colonialism and White supremacy in spaces of higher learning. The students broke the silence through protest and shutdowns of higher education institutions across the country. They were disproving the Western-centric, white supremacist and patriarchal (“knowledge from White men”) point-of-reference of the curricula in most tertiary institutions in the country. Students recommended that university curricula be re-designed and taught from an Afro-centric perspective, as a breakaway from the dominant Western philosophical canon and worldview imposed in our academic disciplines.

2.1 How should we understand decolonization in the context of this study?

Decolonisation should signify or be understood as an unfolding process and be characterised by rebellion and rioting against colonialism. Continuously, it has to challenge the Eurocentric cultural

and institutional biases. Decolonisation should be about the struggle against continuing Western imperialism and neo-colonialism and for self-determination of all African people beyond nationalities or regions. This struggle should be premised on the recognition that there is a *relocation* of Western epistemology into our context and *dislocation* or erasure of our knowledge systems. Decolonisation, therefore, should entail the decentralising of the discourse from a Western centre worldview into an African centre, thereby respecting and upholding the methodologies, epistemologies, and modalities that derive from an African (Sub-Saharan region) worldview according to its nations, cultures, and regions. Decolonisation, as intended throughout this research, implies a call for thorough emancipation of indigenous people and their modalities as a guiding principle for their revolution and self-determination. In *Epistemologies of the South* (2014), Boaventura de Sousa Santos argues that we cannot achieve this *epistemic emancipation* without an *epistemological break* from the Western-centric views, which are inherent inside what he calls, *the Westernised university*. Santos recommends that, “Political resistance thus needs to be premised upon an “epistemological break”, and that “there is no global social justice without global cognitive justice” (2014:133). Hence, we need to be aware that decolonisation has a broader effect and scope, in all areas and discourses, because colonisation does not only affect the content or canons of what is generally taught inside the classrooms, but it mostly and covertly affects how knowledge is taught, assessed and consumed. For the above reasons, this study draws from interdisciplinary theories and anti-colonialism, as a way to problematise the limitations of disciplinary knowledge and its paradigms.

2.2 How should we understand colonialism in the context of this study?

Colonialism refers to a system of cultural, economic, and social domination, which began in the 16th century. It is about a country taking over another country's land, people, and natural resources and institutionalizing a system of domination that sustains an imbalance of power and privilege in

underdeveloped and developed nation. Modernisation³, industrialization, and capitalism began simultaneously in Europe, in the 16th century.



Figure 9 - Charles Davidson Bell, "The arrival of Jan Van Riebeeck in Cape Town," c.1800s. Image sourced from sahistory.org.za

What I derived from my own experience during my studies at the University of Cape Town is that its academic disciplines remain entrenched in a cultural hegemony that comes from the development of Western logic, epistemology, ontology, and methodology. These disciplines are rooted in the *inferior-superior* epistemic hierarchies of colonialism. Moreover, these are defined in terms of rational scientific principles, worldview, and paradigm as developed in the West. How colonialism still works

³Modernizing or modernisation, in this study does not imply a positive outlook at social, historical or cultural improvement, but it implies a social system that defines human progress according to the Western worldview, and as well as promoting cultural hegemonies, that defines forwardness or backwardness (past or present or "primitive" or new) according to a White men's standards. It is because of the same reason I refrain from using the word "modernity", "modern" or "modernism", to indicate time, characteristics of or specificity.

in our disciplines is fundamental to the implicitly accepted presumption that the only way of knowing anything "worth knowing" is only limited to the scientific, mechanical, materialist views, in which, truth, false, knowing, how to know, and what is knowable is understood through the five typical human senses (touching, tasting, smelling, seeing, and hearing). Or knowable through what is called empirical science, which implies that something must be knowable through prior knowledge. For Sir Isaac Newton, this was the only way of paying tribute to knowledge as created and contributed by his forebears and for building the Structure of Western knowledge. See (Bushnel, 1919; Kuhn, 1962; Grosfoguel, 2013).

Newton (1676) is remembered for declaring, "If I have seen a little further it is by standing on the shoulders of Giants". This Newtonian perspective inspired the scientific tradition of empiricism associated with Sir Francis Bacon, John Locke, and Thomas Hobbes. This development influenced the notion of "truth", "verifiability" as determined by these men in their theories.

Johan Gottlieb Fichte's (1762-1814) notion of a "the vocation of the scholar", also defined research as a search for "truth" and continues the Newtonian logic. Leading up to the 20th century, most theories developed by many Western philosophers and academy, especially in the modern colonial education drew from the *Western structure of knowledge* and Christianity, especially in the former colonies.

At the beginning of the 20th century, emerged another destructive force, the German education model (known as the Prussian education), which inspired the industrialist education, also resembled the same dogmatic structure of reason of its predecessors. This was done, to rob people their agency and freethinking, to delegitimise alternative forms of knowing, and to create passive, subservient workers.

In recent years, the *prototype* of research universities, around the world as we know it today is founded on an education model as designed by the United States of America to serve its industrial goals (Hutchins, 1952: xiv). The American industrial education was developed based on the Prussian (former German) education system, which was used to train soldiers to learn how to take orders.

Donald Schon (1995: 28) put it this way, that:

After American scholars who had gone to study in Germany brought back with them the German idea of the university as a place in which to do research that contributes to fundamental knowledge, preferably through science.

As we reached the 20th century, Sociology and Psychology as disciplines were invented, and both of these disciplines were founded on the premise of empirical, positivism, and rational science, as bases for knowledge making. Like science, they wanted philosophy to be studied and practiced scientifically and to be impersonal. Gradually these began implementing standards in the research university setting. Ever since the colonial era, Westernised universities follow this model of education.

2.3 Understanding the covert philosophical worldview: What is positivism?



Figure 22 - A scene from Star Trek – The Next Generation, Season 3, Episode 4 “Who watches the watchers”, 1989. Screenshot of the film.

The image above shows a man peeping on what looks like a window frame. Above his head is something that looks like a camera or some advanced technology, according to the theme of the film. The man is shocked after realising that all this time, he and his people thought were alone in their planet, all along there was a technologically advanced race, whose spying, invading and manipulating their indigenous ways of life. All along, he thought that a mountain cliff was real, but only to find out that this cliff was a hologram that was used to conceal the spying colonisers.

Since the 16th century onwards the colonial invaders have succeeded to hide, their mission under different names, whether under the name of Christianity, “universalism”, globalism, modernism, postmodernism, or positivism, secretly continues to impose its concepts of time and space on the rest of the world.

It has been said that "thus made its values and institutions prevail, turning them into expressions of Western exceptionalism, thereby concealing similarities and continuities with values and institutions existing in other regions of the world" (Santos, 2014:99).

What is Positivism? Positivism is a social science doctrine invented by Auguste Comte (1798-1857), which imposes predictable and deductive logic to create knowledge. Comte is regarded by many as the father of sociology, alongside Emile Durkheim (1858-1917). Initially, this doctrine was devised as an effort to close debates about metaphysical issues amongst theologians in Europe. So, then Positivism became a belief-system that encourages scepticism on any spiritual topics. This was a continuation of materialism belief on a different level, and this theory leads to society being organised secularly. Nevertheless, the theologian foundations on philosophy remain the same. Positivism emerges from the notion of seeking "truth" and morality in philosophical problems – this is central to this doctrine.

The doctrine of positive philosophy influenced the works of John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), Alfred J. Ayer (1910-1989) and many others, and these figures are mostly linked with the logic and philosophy of education that informs the Westernised university, up until this day.

Positivism reorganized Western internal struggles by introducing a social doctrine contravened religious fundamentalism and beliefs. Comte asserts in his Positivism that, "the spiritual power of Positivism shall have definitively reorganized the West" (1854: xxxiii – xxxvi). Positivism, it was

envisioned, would also close the divide caused by theologian debate on beliefs and religious doctrines between Catholicism and Protestantism Christian faiths in Europe.

Positivism would change the order of the day, and this meant a breakaway from the Christendom system of power into the scientific system of the secular doctrine or government control. This paradigm continued throughout the evolution of the Western society from Christian (theologian) belief society to the scientific belief system of governance or secularism; what Comte called the "Religion of Humanity".

After the French revolution (1789-1799), the positivism doctrine was intended to be a secret weapon to silence dissenting views (Comte, 1854: xx). Comte (1854: xxi) once argues that his "choice of such a mode of bringing under the notice of eminent practitioners a complete summary of Positivism, shows how completely [he has] risen above revolutionary prejudices and habits". As admitted by Comte, positivism was a religious belief founded on the scientific, social doctrines of the Enlightenment period. The doctrine of confirmation bias, and standards of verification, as espoused inside the westernised research universities around the world have been strictly steered by positivist criterion.

2.4 The colonizer's standards: Rigorous and or sound according to who?

There is a common or shared view within the Humanities, and within the discipline of Fine Art (as I have reiterated), that the only way to be rational and sound is by using objective knowledge, and this is adopted and imposed on research. As maintained previously that the Westernised university in the 21st century, predominantly follows the universal liberal education model as designed in the West.

Due to my most unpleasant experience of being at the University of Cape Town for more than seven years, and recently participating in student protests, I have learned that most students share common alienation from the University, both as a setting for learning and through its practices of creating knowledge. This has shown me that the University as a whole pays too little consideration, if any, towards the African-centred worldview. If the rest of our curricula is Western-centric, one should ask himself or herself, why should we continue priding ourselves as a leading African University, if what is taught in our University is predominantly European-centred education? Why should we rather not openly admit our real status and standard as one of the top Westernised universities in Africa?

2.5 "How is fine art positivist?"

The question “how is fine art positivist?”, has arisen multiple time during this research. I confess that I was resistant to respond to this question, also frustrated by it during feedback, just because I felt it is “red herring.”⁴ Above all, this dissertation (even at its proposal stage) is a discussion of the epistemic conflict which arises when Western and African epistemes are brought together. For that reason, this connection cannot be ignored. I also felt that this question was an attempt to misrepresent my proposition to distort the summary of this study.

Many will argue that it is unquestionable that within the arts disciplines, qualitative methods apply. However, none have rejected that art history's methodologies are borrowed from various positivist traditions in social science and are proudly interdisciplinary. Although art is inherently subjective, spiritual, based on emotion, the prejudicial way in which the discipline is structured smacks of deductive reasoning, locating African arts within the pseudo-scientific categories of “the primitive”. In this way, it is a western discipline entrenched in a positivist paradigm. There is a contradiction in how theoretically the two notions of the qualitative and quantitative are understood and practiced. I

⁴ A Red Herring is a logical fallacy commonly used as a counter-argument to divert attention from the main-line of an argument, to change the subject of the main problem.

am concerned with the deductive reasoning that persists. I am also cognizant of the ghost of European intellectuals that over-shadows the intellectual heritage of scholars from all over the world.

Although I use my experience at Michaelis School of fine art as my case study, my main point is not to argue whether fine art is positivist or not. The point here is not to claim that the art school (Michaelis) directly or overtly uses a positivist framework, but to argue that at the basis of the discipline is based on an imposed positivist framework and epistemology as the only means to conduct research. The theories underpinning this field of study or discipline, just like other humanities, draw from positivist epistemology, including the research protocol and the accepted quantitative scientific inquiry over different methodologies. This is why I felt that throughout this study, I needed to denounce it and thought that the philosophic genealogy needs to be explained. This is especially important for a university in Africa, to be explicit about the worldview behind its epistemic framework and not just pretend to be African while keeping the European pass too. That is to say, this framework maintains colonialism and its hegemony of perception.

2.6 Missionaries and education

Colonialism introduced Western art education to indigenous communities of South Africa through the missionary school system. This system of cultural hegemony still confronts us today in subtly and covertly in education. There is always the need to decolonise and question the very structure of the university as an institution in an African context. The de-historicizing of the "native" is an active process of "emptying out" African knowledge from global academia. Enwezor (1997: 24) argued that:

The root of the colonial project worked on the premise of two inventions: one, on the ontological description of the native as devoid of history, and two, on the epistemological description of the native subject as devoid of knowledge and subjectivity.

Even though rational science seemed to de-Christianise the West after the 15th century, it continued to use the Christian religion as an archetype for power and dominance and spread this religion through the rest of the world. Rational science didn't succeed in de-Christianising the West, although the scientific revolution promoted secular-materialism over theologian or spirituality, it created another pseudo-religion, which resembles the similar hierarchical structure of governing society like the Christendom of the previous era. Science became a pseudo-religion, the "state" became like the church, and the government or president becomes like a pope. In order to centralise power, science did not only secularise beliefs but systematically it controlled everything else, including reasoning, education, citizenship, laws, as a form of polity.

Since the early days of colonial conquest, “Administrators favoured the idea that proximity to whites, including urbanisation, would aid the civilising mission” (Bickford-Smith, 1995). Alternately, the West has sent out missionaries to its colonies to primarily promote and spread its culture and supremacy onto the colonised nation. It is historical evidence that the colonial project was much more institutionalised inside the missionaries and their organisations, such as the National Academy of Bantu Languages and Literatures. For Vivian Bickford-Smith, (1995: 69):

It was decided in 1886 that these newly conquered peoples would be ruled indirectly through “Native councils”. Their movement into and in the Colony was controlled, but not actively discouraged, by the carrying of passes.

In South Africa, these missionaries created printing press centres as a systematic way to manage, erase, suppress, and appropriate indigenous knowledge. In my view, the universities of today play the same role as the missionary schools and colonial universities of the past. Which is to regulate, suppress, and control life choice and the wellbeing of the "natives", through policies. Missionaries of the past managed and monitored knowledge, and the heritage of indigenous people of Southern Africa (see Peires, 1979).

In 1823, the first pamphlet written in IsiXhosa was published at Lovedale. During this period, there was no clean separation between education and evangelism. Hence, African intellectuals were not allowed to document cultural beliefs that were outside of the scope of the Christian doctrine. This discouraged churchgoers from ancestral beliefs and manipulated them to abandon their cultural heritage and spirituality.

Much of the history of South African art education and education in general, is closely aligned with missionary history, as much as this heritage affects the rest of Africa after colonialism. Central to this was the notion of converting Africans to Christianity as an alternative worldview. When Black Africans joined these missionaries, they were often told to leave behind their belief system, which was seen as backward. Missionaries did this to control, convert, and make Africans assimilate the English standards of civility and English worldview. Also, missionaries played a significant role in enforcing this worldview.

Predominantly, white missionaries taught art to the Black population in spaces like the Art Centre until the 1990s. These Centres included Polly Street Art Centre, FUBA, Funda Art Centre, Rorke's Drift Art Centre, and Community Art Project (CAP) in Cape Town. These were the only art spaces that taught art to indigenous Black people, while university art education was a privilege for the white population. It is through these schools and art centres those specific artistic styles or modes of art practice could be racialised. Artists working within these centres demonstrated the profound sense of alienation and detachment from their indigenous ways of knowing within the brutal context of a capitalist, racist society.

In order for us to untangle ourselves from the present-day cultural dominance, we need to understand the roots of colonialism in relation to ourselves. We need to think critically about the tools we borrow to think through inside the Western academia. Due to an entanglement to an alien perspective, a lot of people have lost touch with who they are truthfully. We know Western literature but not as much as we know ourselves. The enchantment with Western literature and cultural norms, inside the academy, is a continuation of epistemic violence and cultural imperialism of the Western world over others.

Chapter 2: Methodologies – On the dilemma of the research protocol, epistemology and assessments tools

In the 15th and 16th century Europeans not only colonized most of the world, they colonized information about the world. They developed monopoly control over concepts and images (Ani, 1994: xv).

As I began this research in 2015, I came to realise that my proposed question of decolonization would not be engaged entirely if this study did not take into account issues that concerned methodologies and epistemology. Since then, I have realized that methodology and epistemology are also affected by colonialism. I came to realize that methodology, especially the scientific methods of deduction, framed a particular perception of reality or worldview. Underpinning and shaping this worldview is the notion of “being” and “truth”, as developed in the West.

This problem motivated me to look for an alternative methodology and conceptual framework contrary to the deductive epistemology, which dominates the research principle or doctrine within the Fine Art Department at the Michaelis School of Fine Art, University of Cape Town. From a variety of methodologies, I chose to employ a qualitative approach.⁵ During my undergraduate years at the Art school, I was not exposed to these alternatives, and this made it hard for me to choose methods or methodology to guide my research. The curricular didn't teach any other alternative methodological approaches for knowledge-making as tacitly using the quantitative approach as the only preferred tool for teaching and assessing. The absence of these methods for my early education made it hard for me to break away from the conditioning of disciplinary knowledge. I had also realized that I could not use the quantitative approach since I felt it was too rigid and predictable for my research question.

⁵ During my research, I came across various research methodologies, and these included qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. However, I will not have time in this study to explain how all of them work. I feel it is important to mention for those who are limited by the paradigm of scientific research.

After I had struggled and feeling limited by the dominant research criterion in the art school, I had to look elsewhere. By reading the history of sociology and its founders was my first breakthrough. Through intense investigation of this research field, I then became aware of multiple methodological tools available for collecting, analysing data, and for users to determine the findings in research. These investigations led me to realize that the study of art itself and other humanities draw their tools and protocols for research from social science. Moreover, these leave no room for an alternative understanding of the world. Quantitative methodologies assume and impose a particular philosophical pattern of thought has been developed historically in the Western world by White men.

During the proposal stage of this study, I was told that my question was "too broad," and I was not given the reason why and how my research question was too broad. During this study, I met many graduate students who were told that their research question was turned down because their questions were "too broad". I felt that this was a way to disarm anyone who challenges disciplinary authority, on the bases of knowledge exchange, production, and consumption.

One of my professors, whose name I will not mention, even advised me to write a book instead. Some claimed that I wouldn't find employment for this type of research in the future. Some told me that my artistic practice is good, so I should change focus and do practical work instead of theory.

I am well aware that most people were telling me this in good faith, including my friends, and people I respect and trust. I had to be as strong as most of what they were saying was very convincing. Lastly, some said, "just follow the protocol". And this is when I developed an interest in methodology, as I suspected it was the origin of my discomfort and limitation. I never gave up searching and wanting to understand for myself why I was being discouraged not to continue with my question regarding methodologies and epistemologies.

At the early stages, I never suspected that the dilemma I was facing, which was faced by other graduate students as well, was simply an indifference to our philosophical worldviews, which caused our methodological disagreement. The questions of “whose tools” are legitimate to build a house. Rather than let's see how this house would look like when is finished so that we could assess it then.

It became apparent to me that the fundamentalist belief in the objective knowledge within the fine art limits the many possibilities that art can teach us about the world. Art is capable of teaching us many things beyond positivist logic. It continued to frustrate me when fine art professors treat art as if it is a mono-linguistic, mono-history, mono-literary tradition, during seminars. And as if art is theorized in isolation, even though past philosophers who wrote about art education or philosophy of art were writing across the board.

Amongst most prominent philosophers of education is an American pragmatist and education reformer by the name John Dewey (1859-1952), who for me illustrate this inter-disciplinarity or interconnectedness in general theories with art. His books on art include *Art as an Experience* (1934), *Experience and Nature* (1925) amongst his other notable writings. Also, Dewey has collaborated with the industrialist, chemist, and physician by the name of Albert C. Barnes, a founder of the Barnes Museum, on a book called *Art and Education* (1929). The study of fine art, art history, and visual culture are based on these developments and other knowledges from elsewhere.

1. Methodological and epistemological disagreement

Due to a feeling of alienation, since my undergraduate years, I became drawn more and more towards pan-Africanist and Afrocentric classical literature (amongst these was Asante, 1983; Diop, 1981, 1996; Thiong'o, 1993, and many others) as an alternative to what was taught in class. It was then that I had found something I could relate to, but it was still outside our curriculum. I could relate to the position, narrative, and experience in these works. However, these were not in the courses within the

discipline of Fine Art and hence were not available for me to use as a way to find my voice. It was expected of us to use the prescribed materials for our essays and tutorials primarily.

How the essay questions were designed; one is given a general theory about some phenomena, and you were expected to engage with the prescribed text and base primarily your understanding of the phenomena on the prescribed text. This model is based on the knowledge a priori principle; the deductive logic of logical positivism, where you base your analyses and understanding of a phenomenon on carefully selected general knowledge or known "facts". This approach is not the only tool to create knowledge; it serves as a tool to maintain power and centralise the definition of art.

To this day, the curriculum predominantly legitimises a western-centric model of representing art. Additionally, this persists into giving the privilege to define and contextualize art according to the White men's perspective. This perpetuates the conception that Europe is the only and the first to define reality or a first to ask philosophical questions about our existence on this planet as if the rest of the world was not capable. We are well aware that this is an old held fallacy, considering most of the worlds ancient art, ancient cities ruins, and sophisticated knowledge systems existed in Africa, too.

2. Understanding methodology, methods, and epistemology

The word method is different from a methodology. Unlike methodology, methods are tools you use to get to or draw out, analyze, and support data. Here I do not intend to define the word methodology, as it is generally and technically understood. Because this study is not primarily devoted to explaining research techniques⁶ Here is how we must undertake decolonization by reviewing the general

⁶. Methodologies involve rules, which draws from a particular worldview. Yes, you do need methods to gather data depending on the nature of your question, but your methodology guides which data is useful or not useful. Methods involve various tools and techniques used in research and to name a few; these are grounded theory, case study, induction, deduction, literature review, conceptual framework, autoethnographic, and many more. See Creswell (2012), Miller (2015), Walker; Myrich (2006), amongst others.

intentions and implications of methodologies in research practice and their relation to colonialism.

What often gets overlooked about methodological approaches is that they assume or impose a social position or point of view from which the knowledge could be perceived, following the cultural codes of a specific worldview. And this over-time has produced a monolithic research paradigm, known as rational sciences criterion or positivism.

For a paradigm shift to take place within the discipline of art, research methodologies demand revision. As (art) education continues to systematically and covertly exclude indigenous African knowledges and their worldviews, in the academic curricular and assessment procedures. Inherently, the art discipline's methodologies and processes stem from scientific knowledge and positivism. As a result, art discourse arises from a criterion of thought, which is shaped predominantly by a heritage of ideas from four countries (The United States, Germany, France, and England).

In *The structure of Knowledge in Westernised Universities*, Ramon Grosfoguel (2013:87) argues that:

Since the late 18th century, it is only men from five countries (France, England, Germany, Italy and the USA) who are the ones monopolizing the privilege and authority of canons of knowledge production in the Westernized university.

The same westernised universities in Africa, too, are shaped according to this White men's Western-centric criterion of reasoning, and premised on the logic of positivism. Writes Thomas S. Kuhn, in his second edition of *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*, that (1962: 23):

Men whose research is based on shared paradigms are committed to the same rules and standards for scientific practice. That commitment and the apparent consensus it produces are prerequisites for normal science, i.e., for the genesis and continuation of a particular research tradition.

And that commitment here, manifested in what I identify as an "epistemic disagreement", as this did affect me during this study. The positivist paradigm and its cognitive biases reproduced rules and

standard those are not easy to detect, and these are systematically used to maintain the monolithic tools of "know-how" inside the university. I had realised that those who were examining my work during the research stage were using a different methodology from the one I have used. Consequently, and this is what I mean by cohesive epistemologies.

If the university in Africa (or somewhat colonial universities in Africa), still commits and upholds this research tradition as determined by Western paradigms, this even gives me a reason to believe yet that colonial universities in Africa are still alive and kicking. That brings me to my argument that we need to decolonize research traditions if we are truly determined to empower and define ourselves as Africans.

3. Knowledge and the disciplinary protocols inside the westernized University

As it has been mentioned above, in the 20th-century University, the German model of a research university predominantly influences education. The positivist paradigm in the 1980s was rebranded based on the German idealism, which became a model for many universities globally. Since then research inquiry in the context of the tertiary institution began to be understood as "a place in which to do research that contributes to fundamental knowledge, preferably through science" (Schon, 1995:28).

In the 1980s, the then Minister of Education, Former President F.W. De Klerk, adopted positivism as a strategy for controlling the influence of outside politics; including alternative views of gender, sex, race and other social phenomena that were supported outside universities. This law followed from the Extension of University Education Act, Act 45 of 1959, by the Apartheid government, which meant to close doors for Black people trying to access higher education (Higgins, 2013).

In South Africa, universities replicate Western-centric bureaucratic institutions, which have defined the institutional culture, the curricula, academic freedom, and the social purpose of knowledge. Even

though there may be the post-apartheid rhetoric that South African universities style themselves the “African University”, they still operate and desire their Universalist global status of highly espoused Western standards. This attitude annotates enchantment with the colonial institution.



Figure 11 - A diagram that shows how the Positivist paradigm influences learning methods.

Source: Developed by author. Graphic design by Zona Magadla. © Mawande Ka Zenzile

In the Westernised university, the Humanities and Social Science's canonized knowledge commonly use the same authors as a basis for learning critical thinking. Amongst them are Derrida, Lacan, Foucault, and others. The leading postcolonial theorist is either a replica or using the same analytical tool inspired by the above authors. I remember during my undergraduate, we discussed postcolonial works of Homi Bhabha, Spivak, Said, and many others. However, most of this postcolonial canonical

literature its leading scholars draw from Western-centric approach as their basis of critique, namely post-modernism or deconstruction and post-structuralism.

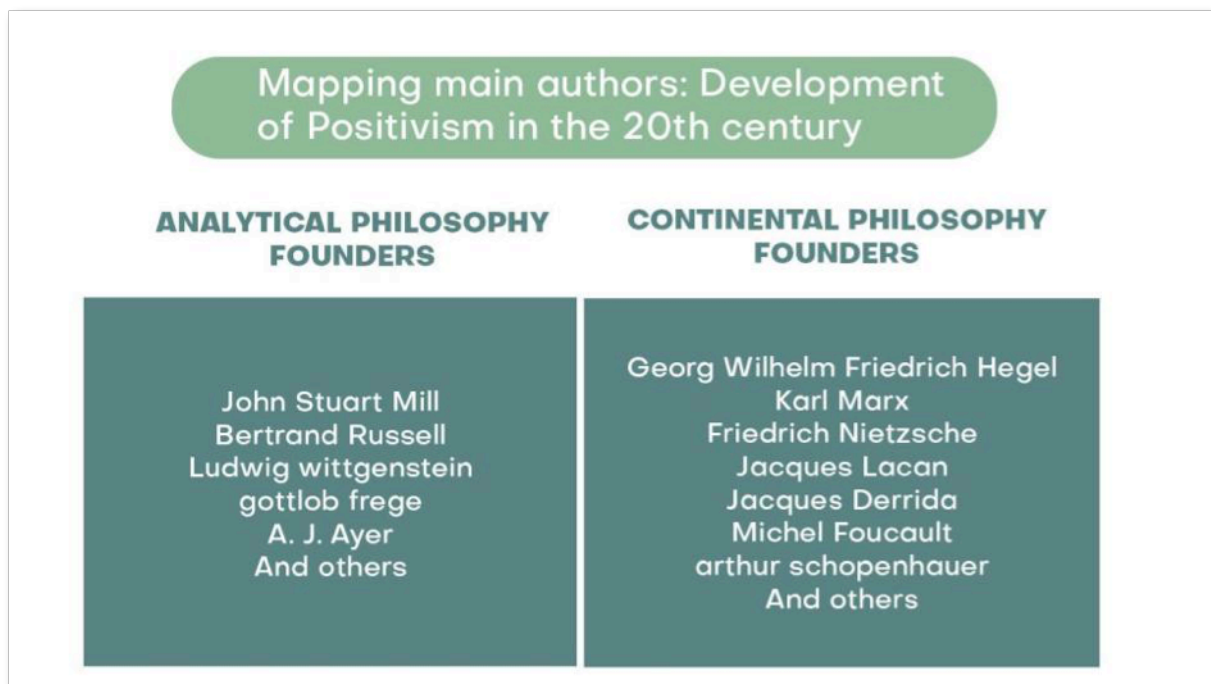


Figure 12 – A diagram that shows primary authors in the school of continental philosophy and analytical philosophy. Source: Developed by author. Graphic design by Zona Magadla. ©Mawande Ka Zenzile

Again, this is easy to see when you understand underpinning theory of post-structuralism, continental or analytical philosophy, pragmatism, relativism, logical positivism and many other schools of thought framed according to the laws of logic in the sense of western-centric worldview.

4. On assessment: Methodologies for maintaining control

Presently, education in general, in South Africa, adopted an America model of education as a prototype for basic and high education, as stated above, and as a consequence of this, it has

assimilated philosophical dogmas and psychological tactic inherent in this education. It is still perceived as if it is the only legitimate form of education.

I have realized that most academic discourses are premised on the abstract meaning of words, rather the philosophical underpinning of those words or how those words influence our day-to-day interaction. Moreover, its pedagogy follows the input-output form of education. In this style of teaching, the student is taught to memorise concepts and then report back to get a mark. And these marks which are meant to indicate the intelligence of the student. This pedagogy limits a student from creating a solution for unpredictable, or for less predetermined problems. In the real world, the world outside of the academy, the students will be faced with unforeseen difficulties of life. Moreover, this worldview covertly creates a paradigm, capable of reproducing itself.

And this paradigm is known as positivism; it has been created a tacitly biased epistemology and hegemonic structure of perception as developed in the West. Positivism implements standards of knowledge that require social distance and purported “objectivity” in relationships between the researcher and the subject of research. Positivism also assumes that an objective reality exists, that there is one truth, and that anyone can discover that truth using the scientific method (Lukes, 1982).

Positivism is an epistemology; it is a theory of knowledge with assumptions about what can be known, how one can know, and what counts as evidence for knowledge (Hunter, 2002: 123).

Positivism uses the principle of verification and confirmation bias, as agreed upon by those who share a particular view of the world. This worldview has created and justified a system, a coercive epistemology used as an assessment tool. Below I show how this confirmation bias works.

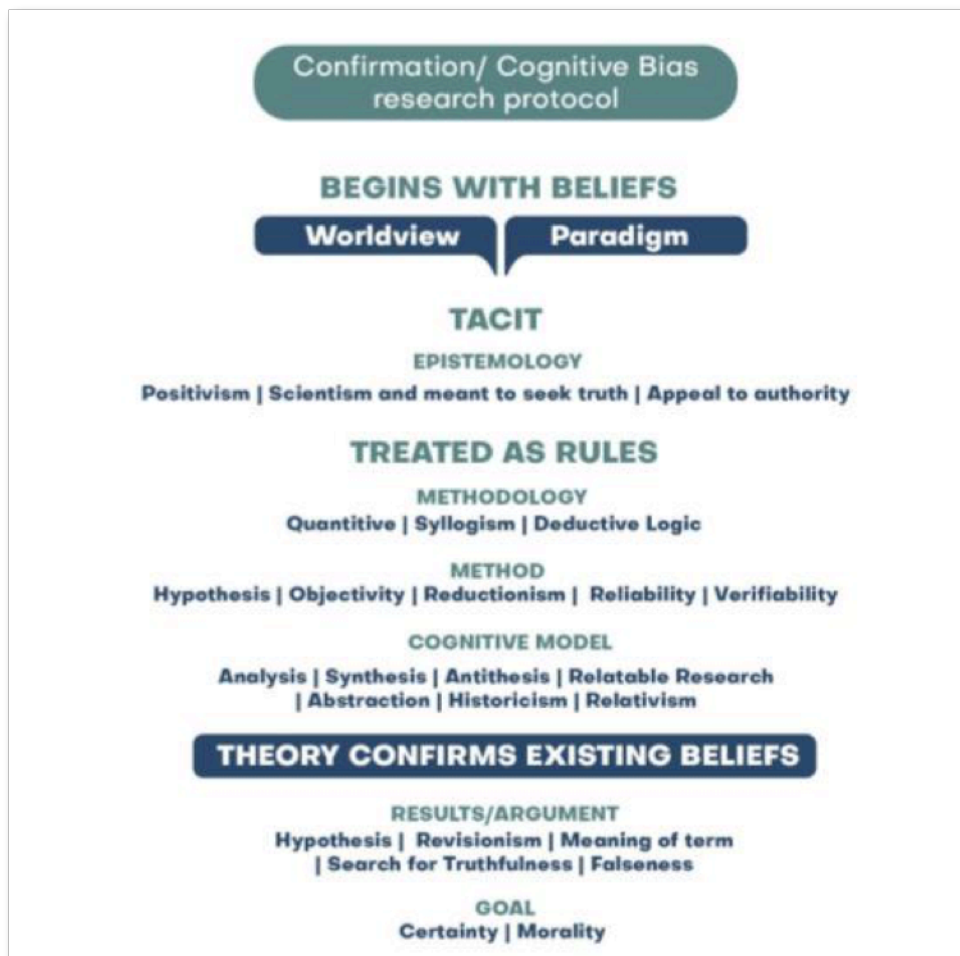


Figure 13 – A diagram that shows how confirmation bias work. Source: Developed by author.

Graphic design by Zona Magadla. © Mawande Ka Zenzile

In this research, I am more interested in exposing this paradigm and show how it underpins the study of words (literature) and images (visualities), to transcend disciplinary conditioning. This inquiry has led me to understand how art education has been grounded in modalities, methodologies, and epistemologies from a Western-centric worldview. The same epistemic and methodological *beliefs* that are used to study art are also used for assessing the academic performance of a student. If a student happens to differ regarding these beliefs, they get penalized or marked down in many cases for them to accept the beliefs of the instructor or educator. Moreover, these tactics are called by many names, and some are called confirmation bias, some are called values clarification, and others are

called remediation. The concept of "verification", "reliability", all help legitimise a monolithic assessment procedure.

The development of this Western philosophical tradition is not as consistent as we are made to believe. The laws of logic in philosophy and science have been changing throughout history. Even education itself has not been the same through the ages. Culture has been changing according to social condition, norms, and belief of that time and context. Accordingly, each historical moment held its fundamental values, shaped according to its expectations and norms. There is still an unreconciled debate in Europe between the continental and analytical school of thought, and this I will entertain here.

I have also realised that it was not common knowledge, the fact that, rationality and research in the universities, were not always performed this way. For example, the medieval education of trivium was different from the school of our current times; both the public and private school has been changing⁷ Moreover, the decision of creating the scientific research paradigm was politically motivated. The problem today is that we are brainwashed into believing that this is the only way to attain or produce knowledge, to maintain and perpetuate the status quo. The question of epistemology in the field of education is overlooked, more especially in the area of Fine Art. Moreover, this is a critical problem this study is exploring. If we need to decolonise, we need to ask the most fundamental questions: such as what is the purpose of this current education? What kind of people does it create? What are the historical and social factors that determine our present moment? What type of knowledge do we create in these institutions? Moreover, how would it help the survival of our people (indigenous Africans), their wellbeing and knowledge systems? To decolonise how art from Africa is represented and understood, we need first decolonise how it is taught and written.

⁷ See John Taylor Gatto's *Dumbing Us Down*, 1992, and *The Underground History of American Education*, 2000.

5. Who controls the rules of engagement?

One of the major problems faced by African artists and scholars today is how contemporary Western scholars and cultural institutions often assume that our art practice is informed by their art history, philosophical genealogy, and as if our framing of visualities or methods cannot exist unless inherited from the Western educational background. Baker (2012:4) stated it like this:

Modern western education will be interpreted as a modern/colonial institution that emerged along with the sixteenth-century responses to the questions provoked by the breakup of medieval Christendom and the discovery of the Americas: What is the man? Where does he come from? Where is, he going? Modern western education and European civilizational identity, as distinct from Christendom, emerged together (simultaneous and interrelated) during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries within the initial formation of a global structural dynamic designed for governing the social world, both within and beyond Europe. Modern western education is a central institution within the on-going disciplinary projects of modernity and its differentiated reproduction of particular subjectivities.

Western art theorists and art historians have inherited a matrix of thought that aligns itself with the rest of the Western philosophical heritage. In turn, it then assumes and imposes its cultural archetypes and understanding of the world to discuss other cultural heritages and material cultures, according to a single objective interpretation. Even our theorists who have studied in Western universities have assimilated these social doctrines. Moreover, they continue to apply it in their analysis of art produced in Africa by Africans. Therefore, if we continue to accept this worldview that would mean that we consent that the rules of debate, verification, reliability, perceiving, and criticizing, of visualities or Fine Art continue to be dictated by positivist, modernist standards. What I am saying here is that this worldview dictates the way we read and consider data, how we chose to omit other data.

At Michaelis, we are taught to understand art through objective means, including practical project or assignments. Students are often motivated to reference works of other artists during critique sessions. A student often is given sources to reference as motivation for their work. This method works the

same way as the scientific method of deduction. Even the idea of always linking the student proposed works to established artists, art concepts, art history, or discourses is also problematic. I think this is how this pedagogy perpetuates hegemonies of perception.

Also, I realised that at Michaelis, even the western art historical canons that are espoused in the classroom were partially taught because they left out primary theories that inform the general discourse in that discipline. I have realised that this consistent epistemology creates a linear understanding of visualities or art. Most of the people I have interacted with, both current and past students of the Michaelis School of Fine Art seemed convinced that "this is how it should be", following a rigid methodology. What saddens me about this epistemology is that it shapes a single-minded perception of culture without any exposure to other sophisticated methods or different modalities of knowing.

Art theory is taught through a single research methodology from the undergraduate stage up until the graduate level without the explanation and exploration of various research traditions. Here I mean including the canon of history and philosophy. A student is expected to use deductive reasoning as a rule and not as an option. This pedagogy limits the researcher or student with one option or tool to consult their research, leaving no space for those who come out of this paradigm. Above all, this limits any other understanding of the world, since methodological designs assume and sometimes impose a particular philosophical pattern of thought or genealogy as explained in previous chapters.

6. The dichotomizing worldview

Art history and visual culture studies support the vision of reality as developed in the West. Moreover, this helps to perpetuate and “universalise” a particular worldview about the reality and truth, while the “general character of Western philosophy is the concept of Being” which originates from the Judo-

Christian horizontal dualism (Kim, 1944: 19). The structure of scientific knowledge stems from this worldview, and I find it problematic when it is applied to understand my African worldview.

Central to the Western philosophical paradigm is that the West has created a dualistic splitting of reality. According to this worldview, the reality is divided into the physical (material) world and the spiritual world. In contrast, in many African contexts, as understood in the old world, before the colonization and the dissemination of Western beliefs, our existence is perceived as a unified reality and all of life as the existence and co-existing, which explains our idea in the philosophy of *Ubuntu*, which is about this co-existence and unified existence.

This worldview did not perceive reality according to schematic formulas or reduce reality into a dualistic split, and concepts on the understanding of all of nature in a dualistic sense. For us, AmaXhosa, for example, Ubuntu recognises unity, community, co-existence, and harmony with all of life and the cosmos.

There is a saying from this language that says *Umntu ngumntu ngabantu*, which means that you are because of others, or you exist because others exist. From this understanding, we then believe that all people are connected through the spiritual and the material world. This connectedness is not only limited to people to people relations, but also the natural environment and its inhabitants, to people and animals. Moreover, this culture, traditionally, promotes inter-dependency, charity, and complementarity as the foundation for its cultural make-up and worldview and intuition guide us to make sense of the world. I think there is a lot to be learned from this culture, considering we live in a generally divided and destructive world. Ha Tai Kim (1955:22) argues:

The logical dissection of reality will never bring about the unitive point of view, the only method by which reality can be presented as it is. The unitive point of view achieved by the intuitive method transcends not only subject and object but also all logical categories, including affirmation and negation.

The ideas of being emotionally detached from your research make an emotionless human being. It

first dehumanizes you as a researcher so you can dehumanize the other. Moreover, historically, the positivist epistemology justifies this practice as the only way of building knowledge. How scientists go out and cut or experiment on people, is traditionally explained by this epistemology. We could see this in the eugenics of Francis Galton, what this epistemology could do to fellow human beings. How scientists go out and cut or experiment on people, sometimes shows the lack of compassion and humanity, which are guiding principles of Ubuntu.

7. The vertical and horizontal dualism of Western philosophy



Figure 14 - Giovanni di Niccolò de Luteri, "The Ascension of Christ", (1490-1542), Oil on panel

The dominant worldview within the Westernized university developed out of two different worldviews. The first is the horizontal dualism from the medieval period, which was influenced fundamentally by Christianity. The typical example of this is the idea of "heaven and earth", or the

concept of the "body and the soul" (without spirituality). The second is vertical dualism, which came out of the enlightenment period, and this worldview draws a lot from a materialistic perception of reality, this worldview primarily influenced by the concept of nature, truth, rational science as conceptualized in the mechanical theories of Galileo and Newton and by the Cartesian dualism of Descartes. The example of this is the idea of "man vs. nature" (natural environment), the "body and the mind" (with the soul and spirituality). This understanding has not only influenced how we perceive our place in the universe but has shaped universalities in ways of thinking. In the next chapter, I discuss the university as an instrument for universalising Western standards.

Chapter 3: University/Universality – as a tool for social and cultural conditioning

First, the understanding of the world by far exceeds the Western understanding of the world. Second, there is no global social justice without global cognitive justice. Third, the emancipatory transformations in the world may follow grammars and scripts other than those developed by Western-centric critical theory, and such diversity should be valorised (Santos, 2015).

In the late 19th century as the ideas of the *Great Conversation* (1952) were institutionalised inside the research university setting, these gave rise to a scientific fundamentalism doctrine, a shared belief in Western classical literature and on the evolutionary doctrine of Charles Darwin (1809 - 1882). These were instrumental in the advancement of Westernised disciplinary standards, cultural norms, and ethical systems, as I have explained in previous chapters. For Robert Maynard Hutchins (1952:1):

The tradition of the West is embodied in the Great Conversation that began in the dawn of history and that continues to the present day. Whatever the merits of other civilizations in other respects, no civilization can claim that its defining characteristic is a dialogue of this sort. No dialogue in any other civilization can compare with that of the West in the number of great works of the mind that have contributed to this dialogue.

Today in South Africa, this Universalist liberal education (with greater emphasis on what is presently known as the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) in recent debates) is an extension of the epistemology of the *Great Conversation*, and this episteme alienates indigenous Africans and it perpetuates a vicious circle of inequality and poverty. This liberal education has maintained a hegemonic system of thought that places "the West above the rest", economically, politically, and spiritually. Below I have illustrated an iceberg diagram that shows the difference between explicit and implicit epistemology.

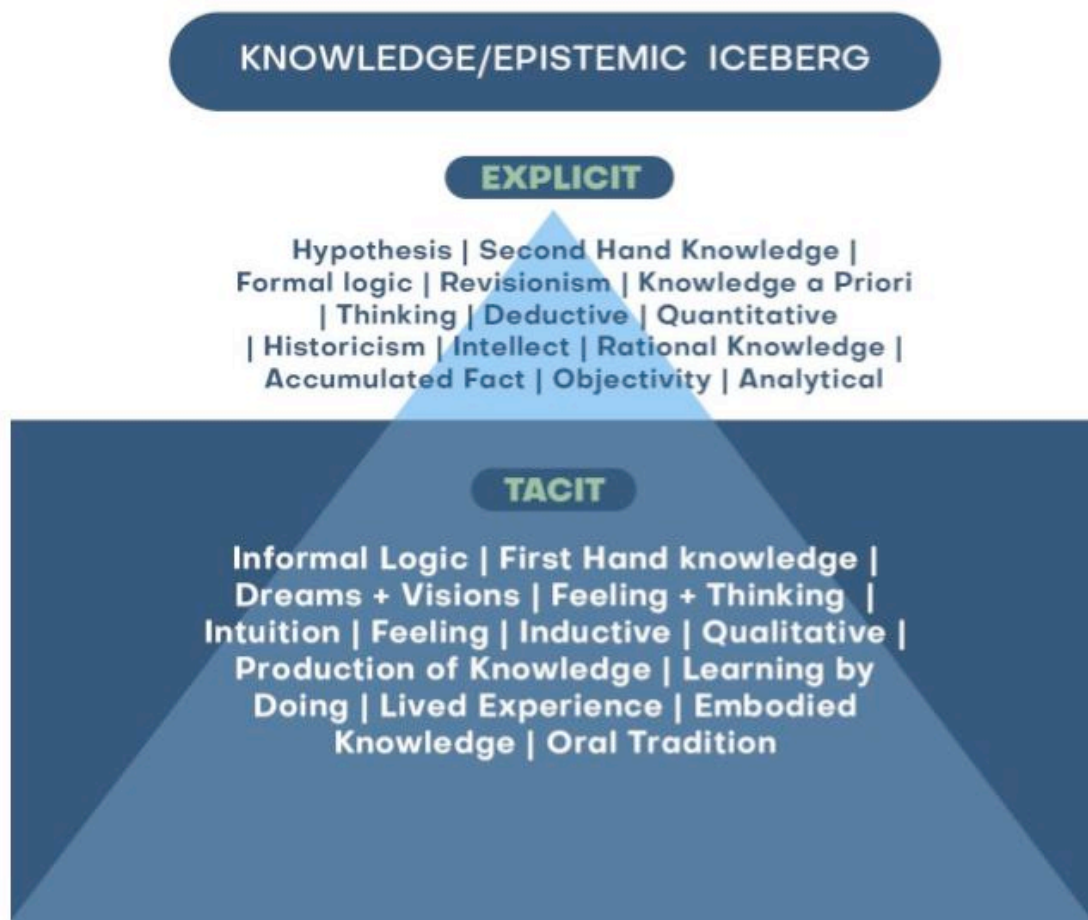


Figure 15 – A diagram that shows knowledge/ epistemic iceberg that shows explicit and tacit episteme. Source: Developed by author. Graphic design by Zona Magadla. © Mawande Ka Zenzile

As argued before, the current education as it stands is a replica of the Industrialist era, and therefore its pedagogy was never intended to create well-rounded thinkers or inventors, instead its goals was to creates technicians, labourers and peasants instead of creating well-rounded critical human beings who could contribute to the development of this country (Santos, 2014; Rodriguez, E. G; Boatca, M; Costa, S, 2010; Nyamnjoh, 2012; & Higgins, 2014). This explains the sense of helplessness and hopelessness in many graduates who can't find work or create opportunities for themselves after graduation. Although this education model is failing and alienating indigenous African people, it is highly regarded by its custodians and those it favours. This myopic view has captured the observation made by Hutchins (1952: xiv) that:

Liberal education is the education that everybody ought to have, and that the best way to a liberal education in the West is through the greatest works the West has produced, is still, in our view, the best educational idea there is.

This presumption overlooks the complex knowledge systems that people outside of the West have developed over centuries. It overlooks intimate ways of knowing the self, as it is located.

1. Art education, institutional dogmas, post-education crisis, and the epidemic financial illiteracy



Figure 16 - Sharlene Khan, "Postgraduate Beggar, mixed media (digital inkjet print on entrada: embroidery), 61cm 84cm, 2008. Courtesy of the artist. Image sourced from www.sharlenekhan.co.za

We continue to say that "imfundo sis'tixo sempumelelo" (meaning in English, "education is the key to success"). Public or tertiary education, in general, doesn't seem to live to this expectation in practice. The metaphor doesn't look to fulfil all promises for success, especially if the graduate doesn't find employment. This education doesn't equip us with proper life-skills to improve our lives on the absences of work and employment. For fine art students, the possibilities for social and financial

success in this regard, are minimal, because the option for job creation and employment are very slim for fine artists. Like most graduate in the humanities, fine art students, too, are deprived of a rounded (qualitative) decolonized education, which possibly makes us vulnerable in the commercial art world and denies us of financial wellbeing. The structure of major disciplinary subjects, including humanities short courses that are offered as part of the fine art program and degree credit scores, are only limited to moral philosophy. None (at least to my knowledge, ever since I enrolled in this degree) of the fine art courses in the undergraduate level are aimed at closing this financial illiteracy gap, perhaps to give those who are willing to participate in the art market an opportunity to be aware of what they are getting themselves into. Even though UCT offers a business course under UCT Graduate School of Business, most of its courses are accessible only from graduate level.

As an artist, myself, I don't think that art should be created purely for commercial purpose or value. I also don't believe that art should exclusively serve a social purpose (political or religious), or to be made mainly for aesthetical taste (beautiffulness or ugliness, pleasantness or unpleasantness, etc.). I truly believe that art has a higher purpose if not the combination of all previous inferences. As I said in an interview elsewhere⁸:

Layla Leiman: *Can you please tell us about your interest in the socio-political function of cultural mediums, and how you engage with and subvert this in the process of creating your own images?*

Mawande Ka Zenzile: *This is a “loaded question” and at the same time, it is very reductive. I am saying this with an understanding that my work is not only concerned with the representation of politics; instead, my practice concerns something greater such as the relation between art and realities at large. Not all of my work involves political imagery. And I look and think about art as something beyond socio-political*

⁸ In September 2016, I was interviewed by Layla Leiman, an art journalist that Between 10 and 5 web site, on an email interview titled "Mawande Ka Zenzile on intuition and allowing a more subjective space for art". See link at <http://10and5.com/2016/09/08/mawande-ka-zenzile-on-intuition-and-allowing-a-more-subjective-space-for-art/> [2017, December, 01]

paradigms. Even though my subject includes iconographic images, I use these historic and cultural symbols beyond their original context. The process of making art for me, if I may admit, is something intimate and ritualistic.

We all need to come to terms with the fact that art has been commodified for many centuries; and the idea of "art for art sake" of the past has passed. It is detrimental for students to be taught only to be producers of art and under-educated in the financial practice of art, which concurrently forms the paradigm we call contemporary art market or mainstream art. Most artists are still vulnerable to commercial exploitation by their dealers, managers, patrons, or galleries in the art world. The fear of financial exploitation is amongst many motives for many who do not want to be represented by galleries or art dealers.

In recent art education, the bandwagon of *art for art sake* or *anti-white cube* has become intertwined with its moral values. As a consequence of anti-commercial dogmatic learning in most humanities courses, moral philosophy is espoused over financial literacy. Cultural conditioning, whether art students should participate or not participate in the "commercialised" art arena, predominantly shapes the question.

2.The Structure of Western scientific knowledge: From Materialism to Positivism

The Universalist centre defined by Western philosophy and logic could be traced back from old European schools of thought. Most noted are Pythagoras of Samos (570-495BC), Socrates (470-399 BC), Plato (427-347 BC) and Aristotle (384-322 BC) – and the Enlightenment period (15th and 17th century). This time was marked by a desire to control and define nature and to separate religious beliefs from scientific rationality. It promoted and celebrated scientific and philosophical logic for answers and solution instead of relying on Christian faith, like the previous generations in the Western world. This period was the birth of Modernism, Capitalism, Imperialism, Colonialism of Africans,

Americans and South American, slavery of Africans and industrialization in Europe and the Americans.

The 15th and 18th century in Europe, there were new developments in human reasoning and philosophy. And this era marks the beginning of Enlightenment. And this era was predominantly the mechanical philosophy of Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) and Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727), remained the most influential in the field of physics, natural sciences and mathematics. And also amongst other contemporaries, the Cartesian dualism of Rene Descartes (1596-1650) is noted in philosophical reasoning of this era. In art and architecture, emerged Filippo Brunelleschi (1377-1446) with the concept of “linear perspective”. These later were advanced in the works Sir Francis Bacon (1561-1626) who is the father of empiricism. Bacon’s *Novum Organum* (1620) or the “New Organon” as pronounced in English, is one the most impactful works in the history of Western philosophical tradition and history of ideas and logic. The New Organon was Bacon's attempt at shifting the paradigm of logic and syllogism, as a direct reference to Aristotle’s the *Organon*. Logic refers to principles of what counts as a valid argument or ways of explaining what legitimate reason could be. To summarise briefly, what the "new Organon" did to laws of logic, was to adopt the notion of inductive reasoning, and call it empirical logical, but only limit it to physical evidence, according to the five human senses. Fundamentally, since Bacon’s empiricism was influenced by Newton, it was used to reinforce the materialist understand of the world, which exclude spirituality and other phenomenon that cannot be understood from the five senses. Therefore, empirical logic too is insufficient for accounting for African experiences, or creating knowledge in an African context.

Historically, we need to remember that materialism and positivism philosophy, have contributed to the racialisation and compartmentalisation of the world. Universities in (South) Africa have to contend therefore with how its internal underpinning structures are based on inevitably racializing, classifying, compartmentalizing pedagogical mechanisms.

3. Inferior, superior epistemes: The White curriculum and student movements from South Africa

White curricula are linked to colonialism, imperialism, and other Occidental discriminatory attitudes, which are created in the interests of an elite group. We have also witnessed around the world, for example, at the University College of London (UCL) and the London School of Economics (LSE), students asking *Why is my Curriculum White?*⁹ (UCL, 2014). One of the students in the film “why is my curriculum white?” alleged that these “White men”-curricula reproduce Eurocentrism in one’s learning experience. These students called for the epistemological transformation of the curriculum from Eurocentric objective knowledge developed mainly by White men since the beginning of the 16th century (UCL, 2014).

Current universities are deeply racialised, bearing the historical baggage of racial segregation and the abiding sense that black knowledge is inferior to white culture. Students experience this sense of a racially defined curriculum as epistemic violence. It is no wonder then that there has been a revival of decolonization as a mode of challenging the epistemic injustices of universities founded on skewed Western universalisms, to the detriment of African people.

⁹ The concept of White curriculum is linked to colonialism, imperialism, and other discriminatory attitudes that reproduce it. The White curriculum is described according to a survey that it reveals a sense of entitlement from those who are benefiting from it. It is argued that this (White) curriculum reproduces Eurocentrism in the classroom. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dscx4h2l-Pk>



Figure 17 - Chumani Maxwele's "Exhibit White Arrogance @ UCT" 2015. Image sourced from iol.co.za



Figure 18 - An academic member of UCT, giving a speech to a crowd of UCT students and staff, after the taking down the statue of Cecil Rhodes, UCT middle Campus 2015 © Mawande Ka Zenzile

4. The student movement in South African universities

Recently, the universities nation-wide turned into sites of struggle, where university property got burnt, and students faced a harsh, violent backlash. There have been flames and police violence on footages broadcast on national television, news and social media. At the beginning of 2015, in South Africa, a student movement at the University of Cape Town (UCT) was formed under the banner name “#RhodesMustFall” which demanded the removal of the statue of Cecil John Rhodes whose very legacy advanced in colonial conquest. Rhodes was also a founder and a financier of the university. After the Rhodes statue fell, this group of students continued to call for institutional reformation and the ending of outsourcing of staff and the decolonisation of its curriculum. The movement grew into much powerful force that changed the existence and public celebration of formerly colonial monuments and used this momentum to raise further questions on free education and possibilities for speeding up the process of decolonisation in South African universities.¹⁰

¹⁰ An imperial statesman, and a murderer of indigenous people.



Figure 19 - Preparations for taking down the statue of Cecil Rhodes, UCT Upper Campus 2015. © Mawande Ka Zenzile

The student protests at UCT began on 9th March 2015 when Chumani Maxwele, a student smeared human excrement on the statue of Cecil John Rhodes. This bold action by Maxwele ignited a nation-wide debate about the decolonisation of higher education and the need for free education in our universities. This research has advanced simultaneously with these events. Also, I have been personally involved in these student movements and other projects and practices at UCT, under the banner of decolonization. I sometimes collected data and shared my findings in these movements.

Before the day that Maxwele threw poo at the statue, I met him at Hiddingh campus in front of the Hiddingh library, a satellite campus of UCT. He was still trying to organise comrades to assist him in executing the task of defacing the Rhodes statue. There was a heated debate amongst the comrades, about the impact this would have or would not have, regarding putting pressure on the university

(UCT) and its community to do something about colonial symbols on its campuses. The act of destroying, debunking, denouncing or challenging colonial symbols or visual representation is very much central to *decolonising visualities*.

I also knew that the mission was something Maxwele and Wandile Kasibe were organizing for some time. On that day, in front of Hiddingh I also joined at some point along with my mentor and friend Bra Sabs (Sabata Sesui) with whom I discussed my exhibition that was due in a month.

Earlier on that day that Maxwele threw the poo on the statue of Cecil John Rhodes, he and Kasibe came to my art studio, in Buitenkant street, near the Cape Town Central Police Station, to ask me to borrow them paint and brushes, for painting banners. After Chumani had managed to deface the statue with shit, surprisingly a small protest developed into a mass movement. I am saying "surprisingly" because I never experienced something like this before at UCT. This action was the beginning of the Fallist Movement.

This campaign or protest (the #RhodesMustFall) began at UCT and spread nation-wide and developed into the #FeesMustFall nation-wide (after the statue of Cecil John Rhodes fell in 2016). The Fallism movement even spread abroad.



Figure 20 - A bust of Jan Smuts smeared with red paint during the protests, UCT, Jan Smuts Hall, 2016. © Mawande Ka Zenzile

The "#FeesMustFall" movement is a continual national student movement organised initially to challenge the fees increment in the universities of South Africa. The most ironic thing about these protests was that they evoked some of the issues raised by the artist Richard Baholo painting titled *Academic Freedom* (1993). Unfortunately, counted amongst the artworks burnt, during a protest at the beginning of 2016 were paintings by Baholo. Apart from the fees increment or lack of student accommodation protests, these protests stem from the same institutional issues faced by Baholo and his generation of Black students. Not much has changed regarding the epistemic conditions and policies of the university.



Figure 21 - UCT students cheering while the statue of Cecil Rhodes is taken down, UCT Upper, Campus. © Mike Hutchings/Reuters. Image sourced from news.artnet.com.

5. Academic freedom and the education of the colonised

Historically, tertiary education in Africa has been contaminated by values, expectations, and goals of those who ruled its people since the beginning of colonisation. Although Bantu Education ended with apartheid, the power to define education remained under the control of the few, and this is how power

and privilege have remained in the hands of the few. In a racialised society such as South Africa, the minority people (White People) has more world and institutional power, which was brought by colonialism and apartheid, and has sustained the power and hierarchy to this day. Bantu education was a way to produce exploitable physical labour as opposed to conceptual thinking, affected not only those who were subjected to it but most tragically the generations that followed.

Reformist policies like academic freedom, in African higher education institutions, historically only protect the interests of settler descendants. Since the Independence Era, the Westernised form of education, as well as its policies, helped to promote and perpetuate Western ways of life. Most of the earliest colonial universities in Africa, for example, the Fourah Bay College, and these University College of Sierra Leone, during the independence of these countries tried to mold the university education with local values and norms, but the academic freedom policies were used to hinder this. Academic freedom in the context of Africa was one of the main tools that regulate education to covertly maintain settler values and norms (see Davidson, 1963). The academic freedom debate continues to safeguard Western imperialism education from African leadership and government.

The African National Congress (ANC) has tried to re-establish the relationship between the university and the state, and to close that gap as expressed above. He is harshly criticized mostly by White academics. The ANC's *Academic Freedom Bill* meant, "undoing the evils of the past". Then, if this was the case, why and who opposes this arrangement if we are a progressive and "democratic" nation? Why is this Academic Bill dismissed only from fear of the state dictating the university and less than the role and influence of the education in Statecraft?

John Higgins, English by birth, published a most surprising account of the ANC's *Academic Freedom Bill* in 2012. Higgins was more concerned with the most crucial aspect of academic freedom, which involve the right to students' free speech. However, based on an excuse that the state wanted to abuse its power over universities, *Academic Freedom* received a backlash from the academic community. Higgins (2013) argues, "*Academic Freedom in a Democratic South Africa*

maintains that in these current debates around the social functions of the university, it is essential not to lose sight of or marginalize the teaching of the humanities”.

6. Fieldwork: Interviews

During fieldwork, I visited art museums and other cultural institutions, in both Cape Town and the Eastern Cape. I visited the Greenmarket Square in Cape Town, and other cultural spaces to collect visual documentation and interviews. Besides this, I have interviewed practitioners and other relevant people, such as students at the art school, concerning my topic. As this study unfolded, I gathered more data regarding dialogues that happened during the nation-wide #Feesmustfall protests and the #Rhodemustfall movement. I have also interacted with and engaged in my exhibition with students from Wits University, Stellenbosch University, on the concept of decolonisation and alternative modalities in art.

This section gives us feedback from two students, from a different discipline, as an account of this cultural conditioning and epistemic violence from the perspective of students who have undergone this system. Below are two open-ended interviews I had separately with two UCT from different disciplines in 2017.

I interviewed Ayanda Charlie, a 22-year-old, BA (English Language and Literature / Media / Writing) student at UCT on [14/02/2017]. She had the intention to graduate in Film Studies but never did. However, she graduated in ELL and Writing in 2012. And on the second interview, I interview Pinky Mayeng, a then second-year Fine Art student at Michaelis School of Fine Art, who tragically passed away, before this research was submitted. Below is an excerpt of that interview of Charlie.

6.1 Interview with Ayanda Charlie

Interview with Ayanda Charlie

MAWANDE: Regarding the curriculum, was it a mixture of African and European literature, or was it predominantly African literature or mostly European literature?

AYANDA: In the introductory courses in my English studies it was Eurocentric, what they call the classics, you read *Pride and Prejudice*, Tennessee Williams, but it is Eurocentric, even the poetry.

M: Similar to what we have in Fine Arts called Foundation.

A: What they are saying is we are here to unteach what you were taught in high school. You no longer will look at poetry and literature in the same way. We are teaching you how to look at Shakespeare more broadly. When we speak the language, we speak about language in an English sense because my degree is called "English Language". So, that was emphasized at the beginning of the course. We were taught the tools to handle the material we were about to engage in with-in the study. So, the first semester was Eurocentric and American. The second semester was the same, but there was a second option in the form of seminars, which were different. So, in the second semester, we had two options: the classics or African literature. Then over the years, you had more choices.

We had Chimamanda (Half of a Yellow Sun) and Zadie Smith, who are not African. Those were our options. The main idea was to teach 'we are here to teach you the European language and literature whatever is outside of that is an option.'

M: Was it only fictional or nonfictional? Are you exposed to novels?

A: It was all fiction. Definitely. As far as I can remember.

M: Did you have any suspicions of that?

A: No. Oh, my goodness. We would probably have to speak about my context and whom I was coming in and what I had been exposed to coming in. I probably wasn't as critical of the material. I was just trying to survive the material. Definitely, not. Never suspected anything in any sense. I just wanted to belong and be able to express myself in this new environment.

M: Which European philosophers/philosophies that were dominant as the primary discourse in, also which were dominates in the African literature?

A: I do not want to name them as though they were not introduced in a transparent fashion but in retrospect...

M: Okay, let me give an example: here we studied Freud, Foucault, Derrida, Frankfurt, and Kant.

A: Perhaps we were told to read this and channel this person, given different lenses when reading certain literature. We were not given that. We were told how to look at something without being given its origins. It is analysis.

M. It is the same thing in Fine Art, the questions that I am asking you I ask them with the answers in mind. However, I want to know from someone in a different faculty. I do not want to assume: There is a quotation I found somewhere it says: "*Now I understand the meaning of the word. Now I want to know the intentions of the act*". When they are teaching, they are teaching, yes I am being biased, but when they are teaching, they want you to know the meaning but not the thing behind.

A: You were basically told how to look at something, but there was never a motivation as to why we are looking at it in this way. That is the best time to do it because in the first year you are in survival mode. You are told that you have been looking at this wrong, high school was the wrong way and you listen and open your eyes to the new way the right way to look at all these texts.

M: So, the "right way". I am going to leave that for later because this is an open-ended interview. This is not a predetermined interview. I am just taking some points from you, but we will keep 'the right way' for last.

M: Another question that I want to ask regards methodologies. I have asked a few people, but I have only formally interviewed one, and the student is in 3rd year in Fine Art. Have they taught you any methodologies in doing research?

A: Yes. The blending of the qualitative and the quantitative where the more people you have or you can find in the past. They used to say, "you need to understand that you are joining a conversation that has been going on for years before you. Many people have engaged in this conversation, and you are coming in it at a certain point in time, granted you have a context of your own, but a bigger picture informs that context in terms of space and time. You must acknowledge the voices that have come before you voice your own. Of course, you never get to a point where you voice your own. So, the methodology was based on qualitatively, obviously being able to communicate in the language that you have been taught, what your hypothesis and your findings will be. However, you must find enough voices in the past to echo what you have said.

M: So, finding voices in the past, does that mean Umcirha?

A: No (laughs), because Umcirha was not in the conversation.

M: Have they at least explained to you that these methodologies have political and philosophical implications?

A: No

M: Did they explain where they emerged and developed? Did you by some chance have introductions to logic? Were there any options or electives as an option for logic?

A: No. Maybe the kids who did Philosophy, which is a whole another degree program, might have been exposed to that but not within the degree. You were never told if you would like to learn more or understand better about why we use the means that we do.

M: So, you were introduced to a certain tool with an assumed approach or methodological design, and it does not seem like it was explained, it was wishy-washy. Because now the way you are saying that you want to start a conversation and acknowledge people from outside of the conversation.

They use stem and nail methodology. The stem is science, technology, economics, and mathematics, but even though we are in humanities, they make us use the same methodology.

Lastly, have you transcended this? Have you found the 'right way' post-UCT?

A: I have not. I have not. I have not written since I left varsity. I did not read books for a considerable amount of time after I left. I could no longer take anything in because I have been given this way of looking at things, but it has not been working for me.

M: Do you feel that this approach of teaching had anything to do with your "writer's block"?

A: Yes. It is (the teaching approach at UCT) so remedial to the way in which I engage in text and produce text. It (the teacher) told me that I could not come up with anything original unless I have given other people to stamp it and judge it either dead or alive and assure me of its worthiness, whether I am writing it singing it or drawing it. At the same time, even if I was to give in to that, I cannot recreate what I am seeing, or what has been "approved". So, I find myself in a position where I do not want to make what's already been made, but I do not trust myself to make what has never been made.

End of interview with Ayanda.

6.2 Interview with Pinky Mayeng

The second student that I interviewed was a fine art student. Her name is Pinky Mayeng. She also found the curriculum at Michaelis inaccessible. This an interview with her below:

MAWANDE: Please tell us your name, your year of study, and what you are currently studying?

PINKY: My name is Pinky Mayeng. I am in second year studying Fine Art. I started at UCT in 2013, and in my first year, I failed Core, which is the main subject of Practical Drawing. I repeated the year, but I had to take a leave of absence because of personal issues.

MAWANDE: How was the teaching at UCT when you first came, different from your previous education (high school)?

PINKY: it is automatically different because it is a tertiary institution and also the build-up of it, the promises, and the excitement. So, you come here fresh-faced ready to take in everything. My first year was easy. I just came in and did what needed to be done. In the second year, that's when I started taking my practice more seriously. That is when you start to question what you are learning. You start to wonder: Is this really what I am paying for and become more frustrated. It is different from high school.

M: I think this is going to lead to my second question concerning the content of what is taught. So, is there anything that was discomfoting or biased about the material that you were taught?

P: Definitely, many times. It is part of the issue of these readings; with the text, you learn where academia is used to excuse overt racism. Where it is overt racism, but because it is a textbook, it is meant to be okay. Dealing with the fact that you would find yourself being very uncomfortable in a space where you are given a lecture about what we go through. How do they expect you to behave when you are surrounded by whiteness? And also, the fact that they show the fault of whiteness on their terms. Am I making sense?

M: Have you been taught anything concerning methodologies? Have they explained the method they are using to teach?

P: They tell you to use Harvard referencing. They make it clear that what you are learning is Eurocentric and how to answer. They do not break it down you just assume that that is the way of doing it and that is what's accepted. But I would not think of it as a methodology.

M: The last question I have for you concerns art history. How much emphasis was put towards African knowledge or African accounts?

P: It is almost put in as an afterthought and from their perspective and in a derogatory manner like it is looked down upon and only one way of seeing it.

End of interview with **Pinky**.

To conclude this chapter, I would like to acknowledge that the universalist education doesn't fail indigenous Africans simply because it espouses *the great conversation* of Western authors. It does so because it is colonial and still holds the goals of industrialist era. For Derek Wall (2017: 87):

The tension inherent in the work of the scientific community are, however, exceptionally high because belief is potentially contestable. Inquiry in the scientific tradition represents, then, a challenge to every form of orthodoxy.

Further, there is a danger that scientific investigators may abandon modesty, presume to know the truth and create their orthodoxy while engaging in complete rejection of other forms of belief and failing to pursue the merit of the arguments that may be an issue. Dogmas advanced in the name of science are no less dogmatic than other doctrines. Efforts to destroy or silence others is a manifestation of dominance strategies that are opposed to polycentricity in scientific communities.

This education is meant to keep the common man (lower-class and middle-class) in servitude. Elite society and those who have created this education don't believe in it. A rounded decolonised education should be premised on denouncing and debunking the mythology created by this Darwinist universalist education in our universities. The mythology of the *Great Conversation* is meant to maintain and justify the pervasive hegemony of perception inside the westernised university.

Chapter 4: Hegemonies of perception: On the image of Africa

To reject the exoticization of Africa is to destroy an entire world-view carefully and painstakingly fabricated over several centuries. This is the imperative for any meaningful appreciation of culture in Africa today, and it would be unrealistic to expect it easily from those who invented the old Africa for their convenience. (Oguibe, 1993:8)

The idea that Africa is philosophically, historically and culturally bankrupted, backward and static, is an ancient belief, it is central to the language of conquest, well intertwined within the cultural and historical imagination of the West about Africa. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* (1975) assert that (1975:177):

All our observations of African man show him as living in a state of savagery and barbarism, and he remains in this state to the present day. The negro is an example of animal man in all his savagery and lawlessness, and if we wish to understand him at all, we must put aside all our European attitudes. We must not think of a spiritual God or of moral laws; to comprehend him correctly, we must abstract from all reverence and morality, and from everything which we call feeling. All this is foreign to man in his immediate existence, and nothing consonant with humanity is to be found in his character.

In 2009, Simon Njami, a cultural critic, curator, and writer from Cameroon, who was at the time visiting the Michaelis School of Fine Art as part of the lunchtime lecture program, said something significant concerning history and authority. He said, "those who carry a pen, control the future". I think this was a potent metaphor. Likewise, Nell Irvin Painter, an American historian, and fine artist, also suggest this in her essay titled *What is History*. Painter argues that (1982: 276) "if history is the interpreting of the past, then everyone who has a hand in making the past, or shaping its interpretations decides what history is".

The categories of art theory; art history, art criticism, curatorship or others, who frequently comment or subscribe meaning to the art object, continuously assume power above. Today, meaning a value of

an art object is determined by historicism. This we have seen through ways we after categorise art. The art history ascribes meaning to art objects, aligned with the Western worldview, which has less to do with the original context of the material culture of the object or the artists, but the views and the historical knowledge and modality of the commentator whose representations must be considered within a broader cultural context (Fryd, 1994: 2).

Argues Michael Rowlands in *The role of memory in the transmission of culture* (1993,143) argues that:

Francis Yates (1966) in *The Art of Memory* showed how closely Western ideas of memory are tied to linear conceptions of time. Aristotle's theory of knowledge, which claims that we must first observe, perceive and learn before we can recollect, requires the existence of a separation between an iconic image and an original sense experience. Recollection is therefore a reflexive process; a form of reasoning by which the association between an image and an original sense experience is worked out in causal terms. Transformed into strictly historiographic instructions on how to read the past, the purpose of cultural memory in the European classical tradition was to recall through reason the exemplary nature of the past in order to instruct the present. A belief that cultural memory is linear has been and still is basic to many Western senses of personal and group integrity and coherence.

And the hegemony of this position has reached such proportions that it position Western aesthetical sensitivity and sensibilities above others. Here, I hope to illustrate further how this imposition of Western modalities subjugates African modalities and its privilege to interpret its cultural and visual cultures on its terms. Due to the institutionalising of Western sensitivities, the West has a privilege to be a signifier in charge of the canon of cultural knowledge. Frantz Fanon (1963:2) once argues that: “It is the colonist who fabricated and continues to fabricate the colonized subject. The colonist derives his validity, i.e., his wealth, from the colonial system”.

At this point we need to understand how deep the West designed and institutionalised systems of control and the role they play in the descriptions and the images of Africa. Here I am trying to illustrate how these have become pervasive in naturalising the dominance of a single view of art, and art discourse. I have seen how art education continues to perpetuate the dominance of the Western canon of thought, and I've attempted to define these in previous chapters. Inside academia the ideas

and positions accepted are only those that primarily developed or derived from the Western-centric patterns of thought.

1. Are Africa realities a holographic project?

Cheikh Anta Diop (1996: 36) once noted that "the African is forced to make a double effort: to assimilate the meaning of words and then, through a second intellectual effort, to capture the reality expressed by the words. Quite often this faulty pedagogical procedure leads to a complete break with reality". This detachment from reality promotes enchantments with European thought patterns as expressed in Chapter 1, perpetuating a psychological and spiritual imbalance for most Africans since they are naturally spirited people connected to all of nature. This cut-off from reality preserves colonial power. This effort to assimilate the definition of the coloniser erases the individual's knowledge of self, and it elevates Western culture as a norm. In turn, these internal contradictions make us distrust our history, heritage, and own ourselves.

For me, this process displays how Eurocentricism is producing, reproducing, and perceptual its supremacy. For example, commonly, most of what is considered as contemporary African art has fed degrading perceptions about the geographic reality of Africa, while it serves to create a particular fabrication, perpetuating the colonial imagination.

Even though there are African artists, who are consciously changing and subverting the old image of African art, predominantly the global art market foreground to sell its idea of African art (Mudimbe, 1993; Thiongo, 1994), and this privileges the Eurocentric hegemonies of perception, both art education and the global art market imbibe this image of Africa. A faked "image of Africa", I sustain,

is manufactured and maintained from outside. As we can find it here, metaphorically illustrated in the *Star Trek* films, "Insurrection" (1998), in which

invaders (the Son'a, or the United Federation of Planets) modified and tempered with the experiences and imagination of the Baku people, and then deceived these inhabitants with a holographic image of their village. Here on, it is easy to see how a violent act of exoticising and separating of people away from their natural progress could prevent the development of their cultural modalities. It is a possibility that the name United Federation of Planets is an anagram for the United Nations, an organisation which sometimes spread degrading images, as we all continue to see the "image of Africa", of starving and malnutrition children, who are available for adoption to wealthy Europeans and Americans. Again this highlight, the character of "the problem we didn't create". Overall, I see this as a conspiracy to keep art from Africa, under-developed. It is also funny that the name of the villagers is Baku, which also reads as an anagram for "Bantu".



Figure 23 - "Star Trek" (Insurrection) 1998, Directed by Jonathan Frakes, Paramount Pictures

In Fig. 23, Data, Capt. Picard and Anij (one of the Elders of Baku Village) accidentally uncover a Holoship and an artificial village that was reproduced to deceive and exploit the inhabitants of the Baku village:

DATA: *It is a holographic projection. ...Incomplete, I might add.*

PICARD: *What you are seeing is a computer-driven image created by photons and force fields.*

ANIJ: *I know what a hologram is, Captain. The question is, why anyone would want to create one of our villages?*

PICARD: *Data, if you were following the children and discovered this ship...*

DATA: *It is conceivable I was shot to protect the secret of its existence.*

PICARD: *Why would they duplicate this village except to deceive the Ba'ku?*

ANIJ: *Deceive us?*

PICARD: *To move you off this planet. You go to sleep one night in the village. Wake up the next morning on this flying holodeck transported en masse. In a few days, you are relocated to a similar planet without ever realizing it.*

DATA: *Why would the Federation or the Son'a wish to move the Ba'ku?*

PICARD: *I don't know. (Suddenly, Son'a soldiers ambush them, and I see Anij jump into the lake outside the holoship. Picard and Data returned the fire, killing the Son'a soldier and exiting the holoship)*

PICARD: *Computer. End program. Decloak the vessel.*

The Captain shuts the central computer as they leave the Holoship.

This series of *Star Trek*, especially the scene above, left an imprint in my mind. For me, this film profoundly explains the deception of colonialism. The life and wellbeing of the indigenous people continue to be maintained by these kinds of a hoax.

Our cultural values are also influenced and modified by those who have colonised us. Unlike in the film, Western education and Christian missionary were amongst the devices used to promote the "holographic" images of a "backward", "primitive native" who has downgraded senses of perception and taste.

The African condition did not create itself, as once pointed out by Walter Rodney in *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1972). Also, history tells us that long ago before Africa separated into different colonies or nations, Africans did not participate in the decisions of drawing maps onto the continent.

This *Star Trek* series contains vital clues, about an enigma, a hoax, created by colonialism. It disposes of the deceptive allegoric truths about colonialism and how it has kept us Africans in a state of mindlessness and hopelessness. In other words, it is like we are living inside Plato's *Cave*, inside which we've been enchanted with shadows and denied our real experience and understand. As the saying goes, the truth is "hidden in plain sight".



Figure 24 - Yinka Shonibare MBE, “Scramble for Africa”, 2003, 14 life-size mannequins, 14 chairs, table, Dutch wax printed cotton. 132 x 488 x 280 cm

European theorists and cultural commentators have granted themselves a right to interpret and define African artistic modalities like the colonial demarcation of borders on the African map during the Berlin Conference in 1885.¹¹ This grotesque imperial act was mainly for economic exploitation and the expansion of these imperialist powers, which gathered in Germany to discuss Africa’s future without one African leader or representative present in the room. The image of Africa in geographical terms changed and consists of borders and nationalities ever since.

After many centuries of the cultural, historical and economic conquest of Africa by the Western world, a negative image of Africa has been institutionalized and preserved in the imagination of many Westerners, the arts, literature, and other cultural institutions, except Egypt (Mudimbe, 1994, Achebe,

¹¹ See, “Archives of Empire: Volume 2: The Scramble for Africa” (2003)

1994). Although Egypt is in Africa, many western historians view Egyptian civilization as something unique and separate from the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa region as documented by Hegel and others.

Thiong'o (1986) once argued that:

This misleading stock interpretation of the African realities has been popularized by the western media, which likes to deflect people from seeing that imperialism is still the cause of many problems in Africa. Unfortunately, some African intellectuals have fallen victim – a few incurably so – to that scheme and they are unable to see the divide-and-rule colonial origins of explaining any differences of intellectual outlook or any political clashes in terms of the ethnic origins of actors.

This view has spread a myth about the rest of the continent, which painted the entire continent as a place of savagery and in need of enlightenment from Europeans. Much of this came from an Occidental image of the "cultural other" evident in its literary heritage way before it colonised both Africa and the Americas. Notable amongst the earliest literature is *Utopia*, Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. The visual representation of Africans in the art of the early Western renaissance such as Albert Durer and many artists of his generation represented Africans as inferior to Europeans. Today this image of Africa dominates the popular culture and many other domains.

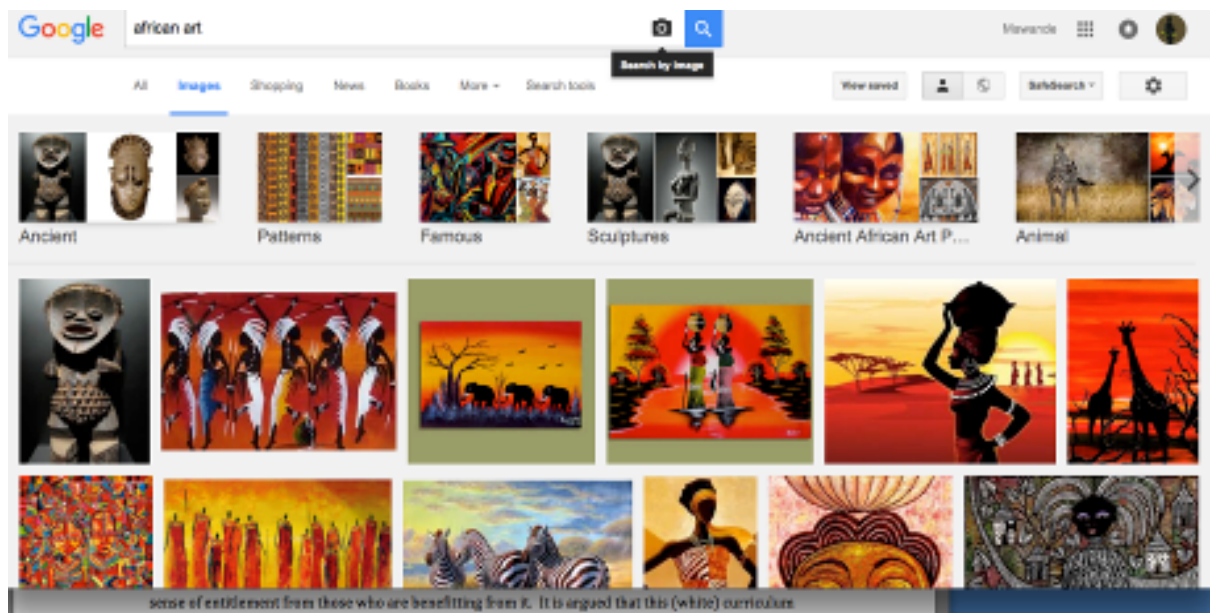


Figure 25 - Screenshot of Google search with the words "African Art".



Figure 26 - Drakensberg mountains imagery

Rock art or cave paintings, found in African caves or thumbs, is an evidence of the world's earliest forms of visual representation and amongst the oldest known remains of ancient material cultures. These ancient ruins contest the mythology circulated and propagated in Western art history, inside Westernised universities, that painting and representational art were invented in Europe. As students of art history, we are often taught that painting began in European frescos, although, the evidence exists of sites or ancient ruins that are evidence of painting in ancient Egypt and the rest of Southern Africa. This distorted view has also tainted how African art is theory.

2. Art writing and thinking: the burden of theorising and practicing after Continental and analytical philosophy

The Western art theorists such as Roland Barthes, in the past decades, have held idealist views based on the notion of *The Death of an Author* (1967), which is predominantly taught globally in academia. This text has espoused an epistemic model in which the centrality of a single, isolated auratic author from whom meaning emerges is subverted. This notion primarily derives from the German idealism

and Wittgensteinian paradigm of “language games”. This epistemology programmes the student of art into a passive consumer of “known facts”. It creates a biased cultural epistemology, which primarily recognizes knowledge created from the Western-centric worldview as "rigorous" and "rational". It is a way to create a "monopoly control over concepts and images" (Ani, 1994: xvi). Logic and objective knowledge are continuously used as a distraction to suppress and dismiss the African experience. Dei and Kempf (2006:25) contend that "Scientific knowledge is an epistemological tool, or weapon, used to develop, dominate, and shape minds".

These pedagogic methods or assessment instruments covertly reproduce a hegemonic cultural epistemology, which centres knowledge-making and perception on colonial Western-centric fundamentalism. Literature, the use of language, the significance of language and truth and art (aesthetic meaning, knowledge) derives primarily from a Western-centric epistemological position. Hence, I argue that decolonisation requires us to go beyond disciplinary knowledge. To decolonise and decentralise the study of Fine Art, visual culture, and art history, we must begin by decolonising our minds.



Figure 10 – A diagram that shows the two schools of thought that dominate philosophy today. Source:

Developed by author, graphic design by Zona Magadla. © Mawande Ka Zenzile

Decolonising the Mind (1986) by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, is a discussion of the cultural hegemony concealed in the languages of the imperialist colonisers, which urges scholars of independent Africa to write in their mother tongue as a way to fight this cultural hegemony (Thiong'o, 1986:3). I concur and recognise that the entire heritage of critical thinking inside Westernised universities remains locked onto a system of logic¹², a dimension of language rule and abstract concepts. Moreover, this single dimensionality is removed from the reality of everyday life. The works and philosophical position that defines the concept of language, truth, language rule or “games”, that covertly governs the dominant intellectual tradition inside academia are mainly from the West. Amongst these are *Language, Truth, Logic* (1936), by Alfred J. Ayer, Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) and Ludwig Wittgenstein's *The Blue Books & Brown books* (1972) amongst his philosophical works. These authors, too, draw and develop from the worldview of the scientific revolution. The way theory is broadly understood today follows this model.

If we were to think about the philosophical underpinnings of our disciplines today critically, we must also look at the two of most influential British thinkers, John Locke (1632- 1704) and Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), who were both influenced by the empiricist method of Sir Francis Bacon (1561-1626). Locke was a physician and a founder of liberalism John Locke, amongst his writings; there are two fundamentally dedicated to a philosophy of education and the structure of reasoning of Western society. Also, Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* had an enormous impact on the understanding of ideas and creation of knowledge in the Westernised colonial universities.

Mostly, when we theorise in the academy, often we fall into the trap of writing for the sake of writing. We lose ourselves in the language game of abstraction. Ngugi wa Thiong'o in *Decolonising the mind* warns us about the effects of this on the survival of one's language. Below he argues that (1994:3):

¹² Logic could be traced back to Aristotle (384- 322 BC), in his work known as “the Organon”.

The biggest weapon wielded and daily unleashed by imperialism against that collective defiance is the cultural bomb. The effect of a cultural bomb is to annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in them. It makes them see their past as one wasteland of non-achievement, and it makes them want to distance themselves from that wasteland. It makes them want to identify with that which is furthest removed from themselves; for instance, with other people's languages rather than their own.

The deductive methodology imposed in our disciplines forces those of us who come from a less dominant history and epistemology to identify ourselves, our "truth", and our worldview, with other people's languages and cultures. The deductive (quantitative) methodology as used in our discipline covertly and overtly force cooperation, it makes research finding predictable and promotes dialectical dislocation of discourse away from lived social experiences. It is what academics in humanities and other sciences often says, that "you must detach yourself from the research" or investigation. This epistemology promotes emotional detachment, objectification and dehumanisation.

Our understanding of reality or the production of new knowledge cannot be limited to Western historical canon, logic, and modalities. We need to apply anticolonial strategies, beyond the written forms, to confront and undo Western-centric ontologies and epistemologies systematically considering they are what Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2014) terms "epistemicide": epistemological mutilation, an erasure of "non-Western" knowledge from the canon of global knowledge. Therefore, decolonising visualities requires a conceptual framework that renounces the Western-centric cultural paradigm.

3. Why seeing is political?

In *Ways of Seeing*, John Berger states, "the way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe" (1972:7, 8). I agree. However, he omits other ways of perceiving or other senses such as smelling, touching, feeling, and hearing (Santos, 2015), which are essential to our understanding of the world around us. Our knowledge of artwork could not be limited to only scientific schemes or

mere visual perception. At the centre of Western visual culture and art, history is the limited understanding of visualisation, which relies on seeing.



Figure 27 - Ben Underwood (b. 1992 – 2009)

Ben Underwood, in Fig. 29 above, is a young man who was diagnosed with retinal cancer at the age of two and lost his eyesight ever since. Ben could perceive and navigate his surroundings using the sense of sound. Art too has reached a stage beyond schematic tradition and beyond the sense of looking and seeing. Chris Jenks (1995:1) argues that in Western society they have:

the visual ability has become conflicted with cognition, and in a series of very complex ways. On the one hand, vision is lionised among the senses and treated as wholly autonomous, free and even pure. On the other hand, visual symbols are experienced as mundane and necessarily embedded, and their interpretation is regarded as utterly contingent.

Seeing as a way of knowing, if knowing is a form of power, therefore is advantaged above other senses. The ocularcentric tradition, however, contradicts ways of knowing in African contexts.

Decolonisation in the discipline of art should, therefore, remain cognisant of the limited sensibilities in the kinds of art institutions we have inherited.

4. Landscape a concept of power and dominance

To see nature, "you have to separate yourself from it" (Ani, 1996), and this is an attitude that began during the 16th century, primarily from the Galilean-Newtonian mechanics and the Cartesianism. The question of senses or sensibility relies on thinking and objective, mathematical, and the material world, deprived of the spirit. These developments could be perceived in how in the classic Western tradition of landscape painting, where land becomes a property. And this fails to understand more sophisticated sensibilities in making sense of the world.

Surrounding my village are mountains, earth fissures, and vast landscapes. Many people, who grow up in the cities and some European tourists whom I know that visited Eastern Cape, are often enchanted by these landscapes as "romantic" and "exotic". I find this strange because I grew up on these landscapes, but I've never experienced them in the same ways that city dwellers and European tourist often describe them. I did not inherit, culturally, a sense of separation from the natural environment. The ideas about "sublime" or "picturesque" are not part of my heritage or language lexicon.

It was only at the university where I was asked to separate myself from my inherent view, during an assignment in a class about the landscape genre where we were required to think of notions as "picturesque" and "sublime". The dominant influence of Western art history and history of painting in our understanding of visualities and the concept of separation and awe, which were propagated in the tradition of western landscape painting and romanticism genre, limits a nuanced understanding of space.



Figure 28 - Esingeni District, Lady Frere, Eastern Cape. © Mawande Ka Zenzile

Since the enlightenment, the idea of a landscape has been developed and has inherited a materialist definition of reality. Landscape paintings became a way to colonise visibility, becoming a way to circumscribe ownership, belonging to and alienation from the land. Art curricula neglect to engage with African forms of understanding, of generating knowledge and the multi-sensory understanding of spaces inhabited.

In my first year of study, in the Foundation course, our class was given the assignment to discuss a question about the "picturesque and sublime". To be specific, it was a segment of the course concerning J. M. Coetzee's book *White writings: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa* (1988), and to discuss South African landscapes in a language that informed by British culture of pictorial principles. In this novel, Coetzee in this novel discusses the notion of "sublime", "beauty", "wildness", and "picturesque". This language derived from romanticism. The "picturesque" is more like an imagined construction of a landscape invented by English painters, as a visual scheme, a poetic language that cannot exist in the real world. Coetzee (2007) critiqued how white landscape painters, especially in South Africa, tended to paint empty landscapes as though to deny the existence of Africans and thereby to silence and to conceal the violence of displacement of Africans to create the

settler-colonial imaginary. Therefore, the “picturesque” is a construction based on colonial “ways of seeing”, imported from Europe and imposed onto the land. “Landscape” paintings are a problematic concept whether, in the representation of maps or painting genre, the themes of landscape painting always had to do with the dominion of land, nature, and exercising power. Nevertheless, because he received education in a Western institution, he tried paralleling the cultural understanding of the African landscape to the European visual culture.

5. The interpretation of visions and dreams

This section was premature to what I have recently realised about dreams. Since I have begun my apprenticeship into Ubugqirha or Sangama¹³, my understanding of dreams and vision has shifted. My understanding of altered states of consciousness or the practice of shifting of consciousness at will to access other forms of knowledge has transcended the subtle, pervasive material beliefs that make it impossible to connect to this consciousness. I come from a community of dream interpreters, and in this community, it is the job of the elderly or anyone who has a gift of interpreting dreams to do the interpreting of dreams. Dreams, for me, are ways of knowing. Amagqirha or *Sangomas* were amongst those who were called or asked to interpret dreams, and this still the case to this day. Sangomas just like some artist has an extrasensory to perceive things about the world that cannot easily be replicated or understood through rational science.

Unlike in rational scientism, this practice was not only dedicated to the sociologists, psychologist, or neurologists. Dreams to us, Africans are central to our ways of life. Dreams are meant to advise us, warn us of future events, and including guiding us and including giving us solutions to our date-to-date problems. We view them as the intellectual and scientific tool, to heal and help people, and to create new ideas. How we understand and interpret dreams, like art objects, has been co-opted and dominated by Western scientific worldviews. Dreams have to do with our alignment with the cosmos,

¹³ Igqirha is an Isixhosa word for a traditional healer, a person that uses extrasensory perceptive ability to gain information and heal others (often igqirha performs both the spiritual, psychological and the physical healing of a person. In some other cultures of the world they are known as Shamans, Diviner, Clairvoyance and so on). Isangoma is an IsiZulu word for the same thing.

where problem and solution emerges. Dreams and visions play an essential role in the creation of art and other creative practices.

Inside the academy, dreams are read and understood regarding Western psychological science.

However, what is limiting about this worldview is its fixed ideas about facts and logic laws. In the works of Sigmund Freud, for example, dreams are interpreted as the concept of conscious and the sub-consciousness, which inherited the materialist worldview. While, in African worldview and cosmologies, dreams sometimes derived from things you've never seen. Where vision, intuition, insights are a central and most important tool for perceiving and making sense of this world.

Sometimes, dreams give us answers to everyday and spiritual problems. Sangoma for examples consults through dreams. We access other forms of understanding through dreams and visions.

This makes it challenging to write about dreams in a Westernised university. The deductive method of reasoning only gives us very few authors to reference, and these authors are mostly White men. How they talk about dreams is distanced from how to understand dreams. Dreams and visions guide my artistic practice. For example, I once had a temptation to read Karl Jung, who is used by many alternative thinkers, but I realised that Jung used to travel to Africa. Much of what he is talking about in his writing and lectures are lessons he learned from our forefathers. There is, therefore, in this study, recognition of African scholarship and ways of knowing that have been appropriated in the western scholarly traditions. The appropriation, however, has erased those knowledges. In chapter five, I continue discussing this pervasive erasure and distortions of cultural traces left behind by ancient African societies by focussing on specific artists.

6. Understanding the exploitative research inquiry paradigm

The indigenous people commonly do no benefit from the research that studies them. These groups are often exploited of their knowledge, and their memory then gets tampered with or made to assimilate into cultures of others so that they forget the importance of their own and the benefit of their cultural knowledge to the wellbeing of that society at large. I had realised this over and over when Western

researchers interviewed Sangomas and other indigenous people, who possess these ancient understands, they suck the information on health matters and esoteric knowledge and then publish vast volumes of books without acknowledging or giving credit to research participants from whom they got the knowledge.

The well known South African Sangoma, shaman, and artist, *Tatomkhulu*, Credo Mutwa, once appeared in YouTube channel (2017) displeased by the researcher, Michael Tellinger, who interviewed him and took ideas from Credo without giving proper credit in a conversation he heard with his old friend David Icke. Only to find out that Tellinger published *African Temples of the Anunnaki* based on the information Credo shared with him but distorted the knowledge. Credo, in this interview with Icke, talks about South African ancient inhabitants who built cities and herded all kinds of animals, both domesticated and undomesticated. These traces were interpreted as ruins of kraals by many Western archaeologists, but for Credo, these were ancient cities, and some were mines of gold, copper, and other natural metals (2017). Credo's story is an antidote about many occasions where Western researchers exploited indigenous people. Many Southern African ancient cities including the “Great Walls of Zimbabwe” are credited to some other civilization who came from the global north or even out of space entities by other historians (Fontein, 2006; Casely-Hayford, 2012; & Koutonin, 2016). A German explorer by the name Karl Mauch, in his book, *Karl Mauch: African Explorer* (1971), promoted the myth about the Great Wall, that King Solomon built the wall for the Queen of Sheba. This arrogance, racist interpretation of Africans and their heritage by Europeans comes a long way, as explained by Credo, in that interview with Icke.



Figure 29 - Ancient ruins found in Southern Africa. Image sourced from grahamhancock.com.



Figure 30 - The Great wall of Zimbabwe, from Zimbabwe. Image sourced from Wikimedia.org.

Chapter 5: Hegemonies of perception: Material culture, representation, aesthetics

Western interpreters, as well as African analysts, have been using categories and conceptual systems that depend on a Western epistemological order. Even in the most explicitly "Afrocentric" description, a model of analysis knowingly or unknowingly refers to the same order (Mudimbe, 1994: xv).

In this chapter, I explore artistic practices that challenge the conventional methods and subverting the Eurocentric narrative and discourse that dominates our understanding of contemporary art practice. These artists are Nandipha Mntambo, Meschac Gaba (Benin artist), Fred Wilson (American artist of African descent), and Meshac Gaba. These three artists are examples of the arguments I have made in the previous chapter of how art institutions tend to employ deductive reasoning, alienating African art. Mntambo, who went through a similar curriculum as I did at Michaelis, pushes the boundaries by using materiality/ immateriality. Fred Wilson questions the premise of western knowledge and the racial imaginary about the idea of "civilisations". In creating a Museum of African art, Gaba opens up and questions the ideological and pedagogical role of museums. I also acknowledge that there are many others I didn't have enough time discussing or include in this paper, challenge our understanding of art, enabling us to think differently about what constitutes art outside the Western understanding of visualities.

The aim is to emphasize how the discursive approaches of their materials have diversified and reasserted their respective localities, material cultures, and contexts. The recent generation of African artists is exposed to major international platform and audiences. Notably, since the 2nd *Johannesburg Biennale* (1997), that was co-curated by Olu Oguibe and Okwui Enwezor, or *Africa remix* (2007) and many other significant exhibitions of art from Africa, there was a robust and critical conversation, led by contemporary Art scholars and artist, problematising the previous representations of art from the continent.

1. Cultural coercion and containment

Earlier, art from Africa was perceived as “naïve” or “primitive.”¹⁴ Pervasive in African art of the past and some tourist art of today, are influences of modernist and negritude aesthetics, and these further illustrates the deep cultural coercion (See Clifford, 1988; Harney, 2002, Jules-Rosette, 1986). In *Modernism, African Literature, and the Cold War* (2015), Peter Kalliney revealed that since the 1960's a generation of African cultural figure (amongst them was Ezekiel [also known as Es'kia] Mphahlela, Lewis Nkosi, Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, just to name a few), were amongst the delegates and organizers of the Makerere conference. These artists and practitioners adopted the "modernist ideals of aesthetic detachment" and where indirectly mixed up in cultural wars of the Cold War era, and African culture was regulated through cultural organizations sponsored by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). He argues: "As they began to establish new cultural institutions, African writers leaned heavily on the idea of aesthetic autonomy, which conventional wisdom associates with Western European modernism between the wars" (Kalliney, 2015:334).

In recent years, we have seen that contemporary South African art, its contemporaneity is commonly understood or defined in relation to dominant ideologies and current concepts (trends) that are shaped by a particular discourse, whether assimilated from the art schools or the global art market. The problem with this framing is that the premise of these conversations is commonly shaped according to external ideological beliefs, overtly and covertly. Also, the situation in the academy right now results from this sustained paradigm, and it perpetuates the hegemony of perception. For example, the art mostly created after 1994 onwards has been trapped within the ideological model of "identity politics", and this is a result of enchantment with Western philosophy. Western psychology and social scientific dogmas are tacitly being perpetuated in our art discourse. Based on global expectations and market trends there is, I argue, a form of containment of African artists within a particular stereotype.

¹⁴ A notable exhibition amongst many that promoted the exotic image of Africa is “Primitivism” in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern (1984).

2. Presence/absence in the works of Nandipha Mntambo

To talk about hegemonies of perception, I begin this chapter with Nandipha Mntambo, a South African/ Swazi artist, who lives and works in Johannesburg and is a graduate of the Michaelis School of Fine Art, UCT. Mntambo, although was taught art from a Western-centric school, somehow, she managed to discover and develop a visual language that denounces her western aesthetical art training. She preserved this approach in the global art arena. She is known for her cowhide sculptural installations, printmaking, photographs and drawings. Although her dominant medium smells of an uncured animal carcass, it is controlled with the various ancient technique of preserving objects. This smell often revives her exhibition space. It evokes, as I have argued, a multisensory approach to African art. Smell as an element of the art object disrupts the schematic perception of art.

Nandipha Mntambo's work and her different methods, most importantly her use of cowhide, challenge these conventional approaches to art making. Although Mntambo's recent works consist mostly of oil on canvas, her use of cowhides also surfaces in these paintings. She interweaves, through these canvases, hair from cow tails. Sometimes she combines this medium with lithography.

Mntambo's works have been exhibited in South Africa, Europe, and the USA and around the world. The astute irony behind Mntambo's work is her interest in the duality between the notion of presence and absence. One thing that I find interesting about Mntambo's work is the literal embodiment in her art objects. This embodiment is evoked by the use of her body as a mould that casts the cowhide. The imprint of her own body is the work, yet Mntambo's real self is absent. In the context of this research, this contrast can be understood as the relationship between art practice and art theory. In her dissertation, *Locating Me in Order to See You*, she notes that: "Particular criteria and preconceived ideas applied to the interpretation of contemporary art from Africa, and primarily dictated from a Western perspective" (Mntambo 2007:54).

In most cases, those who inscribe meaning in contemporary art world perpetuate conceptual understanding, and that subscribe to Western epistemological order. This approach to my knowledge is a very problematic form of cultural and epistemic erasure. Mntambo (2007, 54) further attests that “it has also been shown that artwork produced by Black artists is very often approached in a reductive and generalized manner by authoritative figures within the historical and contemporary art world”.

We should note that this observation is common amongst those who come from formerly colonised context. For example, James Luna also attested to a “persistent myths of the Indian that have become codified in mass culture yet invade the living soul, a condition that produces a state of mind W. E.B. Dubois called “double-consciousness” a century ago” (Gonzalez, 2008: 23). Luna is a native American, the indigenous people of North America.

Given the account of Mntambo, Luna and many other artists are noticing and questioning this perpetuation of power. In Olu Oguibe's *The Culture Game*, he describes the period in which the anti-colonial struggle was gaining momentum in the independence era. In this time, artists such as Uzo Egonu personified the social atmosphere. Oguibe (2004:61- 62) attests that for the artists from the Africa independence era, “It became unnecessary to employ such strategies of validation, demanding instead that the Western canon is brought to question, along with the equally problematic canon of formalist modernism, especially as it was beginning to be defined in America”.

In general, theoretical practice in Africa and elsewhere is the most colonised form of creative expression and since it adheres most to the systematic structures of validation. Whereas art practice is possibly freer. Christopher Spring (2008:6) once argued that:

In academic circles, archaeologists, anthropologists, and art historians still tend to be polarized in their views about the African artistic heritage, though more and more the commonalities between art from today and the distant past are tending to squeeze the rather artificial category of “ethnography” that sits uneasily between them.

It is difficult to completely erase Mntambo's absent-present traces of herself in her work. Mntambo cast the body of her mother and herself into the cowhide as a repository for their experience and memory. I think this is a cunning way of subverting or turning the notion of "death of an author" on its head. Whether she is consciously subverting this notion or not, is irrelevant.

Mntambo also mystifies assigned gender roles, by her culturally diverse audience, concerning what type of art she is expected to produce as a Black woman, by both her society and the Western world as a whole. She argues that: "I have aimed to produce work that presents an alternative position through challenging perceptions of material and assigned male and female roles within both Western and Nguni societies" (Mntambo 2007:54).

Nandipha Mntambo manipulates cowhide to cast her own body and sometimes her mother's body by soaking the cowhide in a liquid chemical mixture and placing it, while wet, onto a mould of herself and her mother so that it takes the shape of the mould. She then removes the dry cowhide from the mould, and the result of this process is the final product. This method plus the material quality of her finished works indicates Mntambo herself is essential to her production (Mntambo, 2007: 48).

Mntambo works with unconventional materials. Hence, she resists being just categorized as a sculptor within South Africa's Eurocentric art context and education (Mntambo, 2006:108-109).



Figure 31 - Nandipha Mntambo, *Emabutfo* 2009, cowhide, resin, polyester mesh, waxed cord, 24 figures, and each approx. 120 x 60 x 20 cm. Installation view. Image courtesy of the Artist and Stevenson Gallery

Mntambo's process represents us with a sense of presence and absence simultaneous. This technique articulates the dominant lack of her Nguni heritage within her contemporary art discourse (Mntambo, 2003: 52). It is important to note that an artist's approach transcends limitations imposed within a cultural paradigm, but those who document art in the limited worldview informed by art history continues to use signs, concepts, and semiotics that perpetuate dominance. Also, I firmly believe as an artist myself that the process of making art transcends scientific definition. As Jiddu Krishnamurti would put it, "the word is not the thing". The work emphasises the smell of the hide, which is reminiscent of cowhides that my family has collected over the years. It demands more than the sense of looking and describing, which is inherent in art history, and visual culture as I have noted in previous chapters. Western art history and visual studies put the sense of vision at the centre of art discourse.



Figure 32 - Nandipha Mntambo, *Inkunzi Emnyama*, 2009 Diptych, archival ink on cotton rag paper size: 112 x 85cm each. Image courtesy of the Artist and Stevenson Gallery

The work above entitled *Inkunzi Emnyama* (Fig. 32) means a “black bull” in IsiSwati (Nandipha Mntambo’s mother tongue). Mntambo is not only concerned with the role that cows or cattle play in her tradition, but she also explores her experience living as a Black Africa woman in a world that has been affected by colonialism and racism. She is always negating how she is "positioned" as an artist or is "positioning herself" in the global mainstream culture context. Mntambo takes her cow motifs from different cultures and merges it with her own culture and lived experience, which she continually negates and negotiates, contesting, shared, and imposed worldviews. For example, as can be seen in Figure 32, the artist is dressed in Spanish bullfighting gear, and on top of the suit, she is wearing signature sculpted cow skin.

In *Inkunzi Emnyama*, she plays the role of both the bullfighter and the bull, and she is the performer and the audience, the observer, and the observed. In most Southern African traditions (in amaZulu, amaXhosa, amaSwazi cultures and much more) bullfighting is practiced as a form of entertainment amongst the youth. Before taking cattle home, young boys and girls used to make cows fight in a dual to show which bull is the strongest and the best. For me, this work recalls that memory. Maybe, also Mntambo could be referring to the same practice but at the same time exploring other people's culture, like that of Spanish bullfighting.

We, as Africans, need to overcome scientific schemes and be aware of the context of the art object. It is essential to invent alternative methods to account for alternative dimensions of interpretations. For colonial cultural hegemonies to disappear in Africa, we need to keep on the fight.

4. The ethnological museum: Methods of preserving and representation art object

When it comes to representing art from Africa, most international art institutions, such as museums and art galleries alike, tend to perpetuate a negative image of Africa as it was traditionally presented in earlier ethnological museums. This negative image is part of an ideological system that reproduced and perpetuated, political and imperialist cultural hegemonies. Argues Sylvester Okwunodu Ogbechie (2016: 161-166) that:

The traditional museum (which collects and exhibits artefacts sourced from a global perspective) or the canonical museum (aka “Universal” museum) is the inheritor and storehouse of loot from the West’s imperial adventures. Alongside the mass relocation of vast quantities of cultural patrimony from colonized societies, Western museums redefined such objects as evidence of primitive mentality, thus relegating them to inferior location vis-à-vis comparable Western cultural objects.

Hence, no decolonisation could be possible without doing a historical and epistemic review of the “functionality” and intention of museums and gallery representation of African art (whether we talk of ancient art or contemporary art objects), to allow the production of diverse narratives (Gonzalez, 2008:66).

This section addresses the hierarchal social and cultural structures and how the displaying, and or marketing of art from Africa to the global art market, still perpetuates negative and undervaluing conceptions. The context of most of these museums continues to denote and cast a stereotype according to the colonialist and imperialist cultural beliefs. Also, these spaces have created a dichotomized conception of art into hierarchal categories such as, “primitive” and civilized culture, “high art” and “low art”. This separation still affects the perception of art from Africa.

Here I am using the critical nature in the work of Meschac Gaba (Benin artist) and Fred Wilson (American artist of African descent) to study discursive methods that are challenging the schema of museums. For me, these artists turn the museums and their politics “inside-out”, and are continually trying to make us rethink the concept of what a museum is. Gaba re-imagined a space inside the Western world where his work could exist without it being ascribed any social meaning, as seen in his work entitled “Museum of Contemporary African Art” as shown below. In this project, he built his museum inside a European museum, such as the Tate Modern. This representation is shown in the figure below.



Figure 33 - Meschac Gaba, “Museum of Contemporary African Art”, 1997-2003 (installation view). Image sourced from www.tate.org.uk

In his projects, Gaba collects material from his home country of Benin. Gaba asserts that he wanted to create a museum of Africa he knows, while at the same time incorporating specific features of the Western museum. Gaba's museum consists of a draft room, an architecture room, a museum shop, a game room, a summer collection, a museum restaurant, a music room, art and religion room, a marriage room, a library, a salon and finally a humanist space.

4.1. High art, low art consequence of "inferior vs. superior" epistemes

By placing a museum inside a museum, Gaba challenges our perception of what a museum is. For him, the museum becomes more than a physical space – instead, it becomes a concept. Through this work in which he also emphasizes the notion of the “insider” and the “outsider”, he wants us to rethink the meaning of a museum and its purpose. His question: “what is a museum?” is central to this

dissertation because museums and the collection of "African Arts" coincide with colonisation erasure and domination on non-Western culture. Therefore, his work, which can be argued, subverts the problematic display politics in most museums of today as a continuation of the colonial project, and thus Gaba's work could be seen as decolonial art practice.

The art museum is carefully constructed paradigms or institutions, more or less like churches, and they institutionalize absolute values and habits to its communities. In a church, there is a shared belief about people who don't go to church or believe in a religion, often that shared belief is projected to those who don't attend. This is a situation within the model of the Western museum in relation it has towards peripheral cultures.



Figure 34 - Fred Wilson, "Grey Areas", 1993 (installation view). Source: Articleslatimes

Fred Wilson is an African-American conceptual artist. In his work, Wilson often reflects on the dichotomies created by race and colonialism, the categories of "high art, low art". For instance, he

often contrasts the Egyptian heritage with that of ancient Greece or Europe. In this way, Wilson is trying to reassert African culture as an essential contributor to world knowledge, an argument articulated in Afrocentric and pan-Africanism scholarship. Often in Western history – whether in the history of art, ancient systems of knowledge, or architecture – the influences of Africa onto Greek and Roman cultures is overlooked or not adequately acknowledged.

Wilson, in his short essay entitled "When Europe Slept, I Dreamt of the World" (2001), he illustrates that earlier museums were not created by Western civilization as we are made to believe. He discovered that:

Even the great passion for collecting that has become the museum culture of today began before the *Wunderkammer* or the royal collections of early Europe, by Nebuchadnezzar the second. In the year 2001, it comes as no surprise to any thinking individual that the significant advances in the arts that define modernism were a product of the West's expansion in, and the Western artist's visual engagement with, the rest of the world (Hassan; Dadi, 2001:427).

The practice of collecting and preserving has always been part of the African cultural ethos. H. A. Hagen (1876:82) argues that:

The ancients of course knew some methods of preserving objects, but these methods were the same as those used for the preservation of food or of corpses, and generally not at all adapted or sufficient to preserve objects in a manner to make them fit for scientific purposes. The principal of these methods consisted in the exclusion or the prevention of the obnoxious action of oxygen. So the objects were preserved or dried, pickled with salt or spices, or entirely covered with salt water, honey, or wax.

Nevertheless, at the same time, art in other traditions is also embodied. This embodiment can be seen in masquerades and public interventions from the past and present. Furthermore, such an embodiment of culture can be viewed in the public art performance in the figure below.



Figure 35 - Phyllis Galembo, "West African Masquerade". Image sourced from doorofperception.com.

Below is Gaba's performative art project, which draws on the traditional African masquerade practice. We can see that the street (the outside space) is transformed into a museum without walls. Also, the bodies of the performers are both the embodiment of the museum and the artworks therein. An African masquerade is a form of performance, which typically takes place in public to entertain the public audience, and some are for religious and ceremonial purposes. Traditionally, in Nigeria, Congo, and other parts of sub-Saharan Africa; and Brazil, Jamaica, Haiti and the rest of the Caribbean Islands where African culture and influences are prominent, there are masquerades. The masquerade wore masks and often concealed their identity, and this enacts the spirituality of masquerades and adds to the spectacle around this cultural practice.



Figure 36 - Meschac Gaba, "The Intercontinental Class", Hayward Gallery, Southbank Centre, Belvedere Road, London. Source: Stevenson website

By this, Gaba raises many questions concerning the displaying of the "African Mask" in the ethnographical museums. These were stolen from their original context and exhibited inside glass tubes and not worn in their unique setting. History shows that gradually, the value of African culture began to lose its importance when it contacted Western culture through colonization and its cultural contamination. This is what Frantz Fanon had to say about this, that (196:42):

All values, in fact, are irrevocably poisoned and diseased as soon as they are allowed in contact with the colonized race. The customs of the colonized people, their traditions, their myths – above all, their myths – are the very sign of that poverty of spirit and their constitutional depravity.

Gaba's work could be seen as reactivating the souls, or spirits of the mask, by restaging his performances in the streets of Europe and his country, Benin.

In discussing the three artists Mntambo, Wilson, and Gaba, I have illustrated how artists, some of whom are educated in art schools in institutions of higher education are, question and critique the institution itself. By doing this, they engage articulate counter-hegemonic creative practices which supersede the focus on visuality in art and art history.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and recommendations

The “rational man”, in European terms, is above all the person who is in control of his passions. He makes decisions-choices based on reason-the proper and invulnerable guide. Being in control of himself puts him in a better position to manipulate and control others
(Ani, 1994: 239).

The Western philosophical character and worldview became more transparent and more apparent throughout this study, as this dissertation unfolded. I never anticipated that writing about "decolonisation" as a research question would lead me in a state of "helplessness" and "hopelessness". From the beginning until the end of this research it felt like I was in a battlefield. I felt like I was consciously isolated from the Art Department to that this question becomes unmanageable. Luckily and because of the strength of my ancestor I have pulled through. It felt like I was consciously coerced most of the times, throughout my proposal stages.

I never knew that this question would lead me to the Dean of Humanities office in 2016, to ask for guidance and support for a proper way forward. In 2016, I ended up meeting with the former Dean of Humanities at UCT, who was Professor Sakhela Buhlungu at the time, to ask him to intervene in my case. It was very brief meeting we had; yet it motivated and gave me hope to continue. At the time I felt like I was being systematically being kicked out of the art school. I spent almost a year, until two years without a supervisor for my project.

The resistance I received from my Department helped raise my suspicion that there was something covertly wrong with their curricular; methodology and episteme, and this has inspired the direction of

this dissertation. I think the most undetectable and dangerous pervasion of colonial violence and norms is at the administrative level.

1. Colonialism, regulations, and education

Historically, the battle for meaning and control of literature, in South Africa, has always been influenced by the "settler-native" relation and regulated according to this relation. This relation maintains the "inferior vs. superior" epistemes, as I have discussed in chapter four. The research procedures, rules, assessment instruments, or protocols in most disciplines have been inherited on epistemic positionality from the philosophic ideologies of positivism and pragmatism.

Even though apartheid ended in 1994, the previous system continued to be maintained covertly through policies that were designed by experts in academia. This does not allow the reformation of the university. Besides, it suppresses any free thinkers who find the courage to "think outside of the box".

Higgins (2013: 71) writes:

There is hardly a need to stress the world of difference that exists between the educational policies designed by an apartheid government to restrict access to and undermine, education for the (black) majority of people in South Africa. The current policy of the government that is consciously devoted to the transformation of the higher education system aimed precisely at undoing the evils of the past and providing the necessary redress to that majority.

An epistemic authority governs us, and it has maintained itself by remaining in the dark. For Jocelyn

Alexander & Gary Kynoch, (2011:398):

Settler regimes in southern Africa required specific laws and practices to safeguard the authority, prestige and economic interests of demographically and psychologically fragile white minorities. Nowhere was this more evident than in South Africa, home of the continent's largest settler population.

The Universalist liberal education in schools omits indigenous knowledge, and it reproduces divisions of labour, resulting in the control of public education by corporate businesses (see Hart, 2004; Hutchins, 1952; Dewey, 1916).

2. Freeing ourselves from Western-centric epistemes

It is the role of the intellectuals to continue seeking answers. From the spirit decolonisation, it is very crucial for us to understand where the problem originated. So, we begin to raise the much broader question within our disciplines, and the university at large or how this epistemology maintains colonialism. So, that we could be able to foresee the smokescreens that are put in place to confuse us and to be able to disenchant from horizontal and vertical dualism paradigms. When we understand proper anticolonial epistemology, we will not allow the positivism, poststructural, or deconstruction methods, to be in charge of our thinking.

Positivism is a European invention, and pragmatism came from the United States of America (which was a British colony until the 18th century). It was after the Second World War that the USA and the rest of Europe became known as the West. The call for freeing ourselves from Western-centric epistemes derives from this understanding that the current university research tradition has been reconstructed from the above-mentioned philosophical characters. Therefore, we need as African scholars to reinvent, invent or use the already available philosophical paradigms (created by one of our own) to position ourselves in the world and to build our educational curriculum and goals.

I think this whole epistemic genocide happens psychologically. The minute one is convinced that one way of doing things is the right way: then one is wrapped in a spell, I discussed this as enchantment. The positivist epistemology creates fear and doubts, making one doubt himself/herself, searching for affirmation. There could be no decolonisation of Fine Art or other disciplines within Humanities or social sciences without the decolonisation of education and its colonial cultural conceptions, in which these fields of studies founded upon.

To be able to undo the damage done by colonialism, we need new awareness that can guide us to arrive at what it is we are decolonising rather than taking on dominant epistemologies. For us to begin

dismantling or decolonizing the scientific paradigm in research, I think we need to ask ourselves why we are made to believe that deduction logic is the only method of creating this knowledge?

To avoid assimilation and coercion, we must be able to see this. The methodology and epistemology we are trained in, hiding this connection. Also, I have stated previously, this methodology only relies on known facts, that is why we often discouraged from using non-disciplinary knowledge, or our views to create knowledge, which is afforded by qualitative approach. From what I have realised, the only thing that can change it is to apply a more rounded epistemic approach, which considers the mental, spiritual, emotional, and physical experience of the world.



Figure 37 - A diagram that shows how the Strategic learning method work, which is an ideal method for a rounded approach. Source: Developed by author. Graphic design by Zona Magadla. © Mawande Ka Zenzile

The world is entering its second phase of decolonisation, and it is the right time for the oppressed to mobilize, and lead this political movement and challenge any traces of injustice from our colonial past. It is a time to challenge and question the Eurocentric worldview.

Throughout my undergraduate years, I have always felt a sense of dislocation from the course contents, most of what was taught in the fine art discipline characterized the “Westernized university”. This discipline continues to be systematically coercive and biased while claiming to be progressive. Moreover, I have realized that this pervasive practice is concealed and protected by its epistemology. Smith (1999:65) notes that:

Academic knowledges are organized around the idea of disciplines and fields of knowledge. These are deeply implicated in each other and share genealogical foundations in various classical and Enlightenment philosophies. Most of the 'traditional' disciplines are grounded in cultural worldviews, which are either antagonistic to different belief systems or have no methodology for dealing with other knowledge systems. Underpinning all of what is taught at universities is the belief in the concept of science as the all-embracing method for gaining an understanding of the world.

This project contributes to a broader debate concerning decolonisation and the epistemic challenges faced by South African artists and intellectuals because of colonialism and Apartheid.

2.1 The bias “truthfulness” of confirmation bias

The so-called analytical rigor of the confirmation bias doctrine originated from logical positivism and was intended to coerce systematically. Confirmation bias justifies the rules of "confirming" or "verifying" according to shared beliefs and rules as intended Universalists of the 1900s. For Mercier and Sperber (2017:216), "the confirmation bias makes it harder for a reasoner to help the lone reasoner arrive at better beliefs and better decisions". In Yurugu, Marimba Ani has referred to this as

“Utamawazo”. Utamawazo, Ani (1994: 14) argues, is the result of “the thought patterns of a group of people who are culturally related, in so far as these thought patterns have genealogy by the culture”.

Therefore, decolonisation in this study necessitates a renunciation and reassertion of our philosophical character, languages, methodology, and worldview, as a point of departure in reinventing ourselves and freeing ourselves from our intellectual, spiritual colonisation. All of the above criticism does not mean that we entirely rebuke or refute knowledge created in the West, but we must "recognise European influence without accepting European dominance" (Ani, 1994: xvii). If we accept this view, as thinkers or makers of knowledge from the global South, for example, we allow others to break us away from our understanding of our spirituality and our view of reality, more especially our relationship with our ancestors.

It is too restrictive for those who come from the global South and indigenous people to adopt, for example, the “verifiability principle.”¹⁵ As a way of proving or disproving the validity of our data or theses, this method requires us to break our spiritual bond to sound sane and rational and to accommodate the materialist, scientific and mechanical worldview. Also, furthermore, this worldview denies any subjective or intuitive retrieval of data or knowledge in ways that cannot be explained by "rational science".

The most dangerous and damaging effect of this worldview, in my view, is that it robs an individual the ability for thinking and reasoning, and capacity to have confidence in himself or herself as an agent of knowledge. Instead, an individual is brainwashed to rely on authority for confirmation or legitimacy from the epistemological position of power. This appealing to authority fallacy enforces a hierarchal structure of reasoning. The indoctrination begins in the early stages of learning. The idea of

¹⁵ This is because of the verifiability principle, which was advocated by pragmatists (the American outgrowth of positivism) in the design of the current educational philosophy, descends from empiricism that has developed since the Enlightenment period. Primarily, it rejected any non-materialist perception of the world.

having someone as an authority of reason, presupposes that the child or student does not have a mind of their own to create and solve problems. The role of learning is reduced into memorizing and report back (input, processing, and output). Also, as the documented history of education and curricular portrays this mode derives from the objective reasoning of pragmatism and logical positivism.

This epistemology (positivism) has contaminated and destroyed the spirituality of most colonised people of the world. For example, in countries like Brazil, in South America, it became a secularised religious movement that was behind the formation of the government of that world. A Positivism church exists in some parts of the world. And this church, which draws from the philosophy of Auguste Comte, espoused scientific knowledge over local epistemes of the colonised. Yes, in the Western world, this secular religion might have been useful to fight the fundamentalist thinking caused by the Christian faith and might have resolved their religious conflicts. That is their problem. But in other parts of the world, especially Southern Africa, our spirituality and ways of life are intertwined and had nothing to do with theologian dogmas. Christianity and secularism have contaminated local spirituality and marginalised the rest of their practices. Hence we are left to deal with "the problem we didn't create".



Figure 38 – Mawande Ka Zenzile in front of the Positivism church building in Paris. 2019 © Mawande Ka Zenzile

We have our systems of cooperation, for example, the philosophy of Ubuntu, which emphasizes harmonious relations with each other, with nature (natural environment), and had lived for many years without the "civility" or notions of "truth" of Westerners. For example, in kwaXhosa, it is forbidden to

kill a bee. A bee is a very respected entity. It doesn't come by surprise to me when the self-acclaimed "environmentalist" talks about the importance of bees in what they call biodiversity or ecosystems.

We have created social systems and modalities of knowing before our encounter with Europe. No matter how righteous this epistemology pretends to be, its fundamental intention is to justify colonialism should be denounced and debunked. This positivism in the colonised world became a covert instrument to perpetuate the colonisation of the mind, the tool of power, to dislocate, and relocate the perception of the colonised people, to exploit them and redefine their future. It has created dislocation, just like in that Star Trek film I've discussed in chapter 4. Really? "Are Africa's realities holographic project"? Are Africans, Southern Africans (especially), really in touch with our realities as Africans?

If we are truly serious about our cultural and epistemic emancipation, we need to reconsider our methodologies and epistemologies to account for our reality fully. Ramon Grosfoguel (2012) argues that if we are to achieve this epistemic emancipation, we need to remain disenchanted with Western-centric knowledge. And this is not an easy task, yet it is possible. Because disenchantment, I've realised that it meant going against the grain of fundamental beliefs about what knowledge and knowing means inside academia. This means that the aspiring scholar has to be prepared to go against the most violent, biased and rigidly upheld beliefs. One should expect cohesion and obscurantism, as I have and many, had, before me. The foundation of this epistemology (positivism) has created brotherhood fraternities, which for centuries has managed and organised human reasoning and cooperation, implicitly.

As I understand it now, this cultural imposition is fundamental to the broader cultural and economic imperialism of the Western world. This study examines how the Western philosophic tradition and education, or what is to be termed universal education, has inherited this colonial and ideological construction. According to Grosfoguel (2013), Westernised university is a structure of power that is

intended for promoting Eurocentric knowledge around the world. Hence westernized elites in the third world become intermediaries between the West and the rest.

I grew up from a community of *Imbongi*¹⁶ Individuals who are inclined to receive information in ways that cannot be explained via science. Does this mean we should automatically abandon these traditional modalities and assimilate Western-centric modalities? I think not. By leaving our worldview, we will continue being mentally enslaved to serve others. We would be volunteering ourselves for an epistemic death. We are a vanishing society, and we are continuing losing our connection to our ancestors and nature. And this could only mean death. Why should we be forced to accept the Western positivist paradigm and its deductive and logic over our local modalities and epistemologies? Who is to choose for whom?

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¹⁶ Imbongi could be loosely translated as poets, but in IsiXhosa speaking people nation, Imbongi is the keeper of knowledge, and also we believe that their praises and expertise derive from ancestors. Artist, too sometimes derive their insights from this same source.

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